Goins, Melinda. The Crimmons Place and other stories.
(1968) Directed by: Fred Chappell pp 95.

The four stories are set in hunting country that looks like parts of Maryland or Georgia or upstate New York. The country is real and the horses are real but the people are not. The characters are incomplete ideas of people which have been isolated from greatly complicated individuals. I have separated ideas that are clear to me while these people I have actually met are too complex for me and maybe for themselves to understand.

Three stories are told by women. Dierdre Fitzhugh is perhaps thirty while the other two narrators are not yet twenty. The last story is written in the third person; it is about a man who will soon become old. The stories are arranged in the order which they were written and I like to think the blatent flaws are concentrated in the first story "The Crimmons Place". One trouble with it is the opening scene which is cut in two by a long digression necessary to the plot but poorly integrated into the rest of the story; its structure is ragged. I like the last story, Happy Buckey's Dream Delight. It is about Ben Waters, father of all hunting country, who appears briefly in the other three stories. He is my effort to justify a way of life, which may not be justifiable. Yet Ben Waters may have found there is as much justification in this way of life as there is for any other. The story presented a problem

for me because it is unbroken by dialogue or any real action and it is the first story I have not limited to the first person with someone's own way of speaking as a crutch. A fine story is one where the people are not fragmented; Peter Taylor can do it, showing whole people who are moving in a total world of their own. I want to write a story I can read after some time and while seeing my isolated idea, remembering how I put it there, I would like to surprise myself with more, maybe find a real person I didn't know I knew; then I would have the content of a fine story.

THE CRIMMONS PLACE
AND OTHER STORIES

by

Melinda Goins

A Thesis Submitted to
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Approved by

Fred Chappell
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THE CRIMMONS PLACE

It is not that we disliked the Culclasures, they couldn't be nicer, but what were we to think about a family who would move into the Crimmons Place? And it was a misfortune the way we learned about it. Not that I could think of a really pleasant way to learn that the Crimmons Place had people in it. With my hair half undone and sitting at my dressing table I only looked out my window and there it was to see. Like an explosion. Every light in the Crimmons Place popped on upstairs and over the entry, the garage, and downstairs, and the floodlights all over the grounds. The Crimmons Place was making its own halo, stronger even than the twilight. Of course I don't know that they all came on the instant I looked out my dressing room, I rather doubt it, but it was the realization. The haze was like the city the way you see it when you're still out on the turnpike. "Paddy," I said. I said it so quietly that he came running to the window with one boot off, expecting probably to see the children playing in the well again. I had just heard him flick on the heater in the closet, and at a time like that to learn there were people. God Almighty, I would have said, there are people in the Crimmons Place. That was all I could think of. But with Paddy about to go into the closet for lord knew how many hours, and with seven pounds to lose that he had got from his

parties. He just stood behind me hugging one boot to his chest, one of the brown pair, squeezing it with both arms folded around it. I felt little pellets of mud crumble from the heel onto my back. At a time like that. And finally all he could say, and that almost in a whisper, "God Almighty, they've got people in the Crimmons Place."

He sat on the bed rail looking at his boot and I alarmed him again. I don't know what I said exactly, but there was a wraith of a figure flying around the curve in the Crimmons Place driveway with gray hair flying out like puppet strings. Paddy got to his feet and the child darted through the gap in the trees that old Mrs. Crimmons' car had made. The figure came down the bank in bounces and then fell in the creek mud at the bottom. Because even in dry weather there is always a mud bath at the bottom of the bank, dividing our place from the Crimmons place. But she sprang up from one muddy knee and pushed up with her hands, at a run. It was impossible not to see she was racing around to the porch of our place.

I sat quietly pulling pins out of my hair, scraping the scalp a little to make it tingle. "I wish sometimes that our place were set at angle from the road. The Crimmons Place probably doesn't get noise if a truck comes down the Valley road." I had said that to Paddy about the noise before, and I don't know why I said it at a time like that. Trivial.

Because of the gap in the row of trees, we could see down the curve in the drive right into the entrance of the Place. Not that we would want to look. Then that creature when she came flying down the bank and up the hill to our Place — we could see it all.

If Mother had found out about the Culclasures and had just told us before we saw the place lit up it would have been easier. She would have come over in a gray flurry with her hair frizzing on the sides, escaping from her bun. The way it does when she gets upset. She would have said "Children, life has its vicissitudes". Then she would have plumped down to get ready for the news. Silent, expectant, while Paddy put a glass in her hand and we asked what in the world was the matter with her. She does know about things like that; she has a thing about real estate. She knows who has lived where for the last two hundred years. And especially the Crimmons Place. It worried her tremendously that it was the farm next to ours, and the trouble if that kind of people move in. But no one would have ever dreamed the Culclasures. God Almighty.

Mother has delighted since I can remember in telling about the Crimmons Place. She could start her hair frizzing out from the bun just talking about it with an expression on her face that was quietly horrified. But it is a story everyone knows and Mother could never embellish the facts because she would instantly be caught at it. Well, there are some

details we don't know for certain, like the color of the car old Mrs. Crimmons swept over the bank and what her son said when they found them. And I think we still tell the thing without really understanding a word of it. It was simply the beginning of a long nightmare when Old Mrs. Crimmons appeared at Ben Waters' place a long time ago. The year he had just become Master of the Elkridge-Loudoun Hunt. The year his father died and he took his place. She showed herself to Ben with her tale that she wanted to buy land right in the middle of our hunt country. Going to build a place for her son. Mr. Smith she called him. And it was because he was away in Ireland and wouldn't come home. He was involved in some 'cause' over there, as Mrs. Crimmons put it. Anyway she had got hold of some house plans of a place he admired, some Irish manor house, and she wanted to build it for him here. To get him home I suppose. Mother never saw the old lady's son, no one did I don't think. But Mrs. Crimmons had some good horses - her second husband hunted in Virginia and had a good stud that Ben knew of. And then she talked Ben into selling her land right in the middle of our country. But he was young then. But then Mister Smith, Mother tells it Master Smith, never came to his house. Something about Black and Tans that fought with him. He must have been a truly shiftless person. Even after all the trouble the place has caused, Ben sounds sorry for the old Mrs. Crimmons when he tells about her. He was sorry when she came to her son's place and looked at the

entrance. She never went inside the place nobody thinks. I can understand that, I suppose. Then her son by the Virginia hunt master showed up. Rogers Smith Crimmons. And one night he drove the old lady's car down the drive from the Valley Road and she drove his little car from the house. As if it were planned, but Rogers was drunk everyone is sure. They met in the curve and the old lady's car plowed through two baby trees with the board railings you set around baby trees. Took them right down the bank with her. Ben found her at the bottom of the bank in the morning when he was walking hounds. Rogers car was hanging off the top of the bank and Rogers was in it asleep. The old lady's car was turned over across the mud creek and Mrs. Crimmons was in it. In the mud creek. Not that Mother always gets stories like that straight, but then in this case she had to. And that was Ben's version, too. We do think that Mrs. Crimmons' car was purple, and that when they got Rogers awake he said in his inimitable way "The Old Lady is dead, God save the old Lady Crimmons."

Paddy and I have pulled Rogers out of a ditch frequently since we have lived here. Twice in the last five years right on Valley Road, and he was driving a purple car. I cannot tell if that enhances the detail that Mrs. Crimmons died in a purple car. Or purple was added since all Rogers' cars have been purple. But when I think of the old Lady and see the gap in the young trees, I know it was purple. Rogers got rid of the

Crimmons Place handily in an unethical way. He put it in the hands of the real estate bastard Edward Bundy. Mother says she has never met anyone in the world named Bundy who was worth a sigh. But we people, and Mother especially, made it difficult for anyone to get hold of the Crimmons Place. And none of us, surely, would touch it. Bundy was such a fool to think he could turn the place into a country club and he even sounded Ben Waters for more land to put in a golf course. Nothing could have been more ludicrous. A ninth hole in the middle of our hunter trial course. Nothing could have been more horrible. Bundy was frustrated with so much real estate; not even an outsider would buy a place with twenty-four acres of lawn with little round gardens everywhere, and not a barn on the place. Even if it was a beautiful Irish manor house. Which it was. Though if the owners of the original house knew about it, they would be right to sue. The Crimmons place did not belong anywhere in the world. Bundy finally after years of nothing more than tending twenty-four acres of lawn, put pigs out near the entrance to Ben Waters' place. But that has been before I could remember and Ben should be experienced enough to handle something like that if it were to happen again. We have wanted to think so. And all Elkridge-Loudoun really suffered from it is that we inherited Rogers Smith Crimmons. Paddy had the misfortune to find out that Rogers is some kind of cousin from the Virginia lineage on his father's side, related vaguely to the Old Lady's second husband. Paddy found out that Rogers added the last letter to his name him-

self. For the effect he thought it would produce I suppose. Anyone who would tamper with his own name for effect. Lord knows I would have changed my name long ago, but my name is family and that does make it suitable. Paddy has showed his relation to Rogers by pulling him out of ditches over the years, and he has showed his aversion by turning him out of the house the next morning.

If anything was done to the Crimmons Place after that, Bundy had to do it. Rogers would come to the entrance and salute the place sometimes. He would stand in the drive and laugh sometimes and the house with the kitchen wing and the garage on the other side would act like a sounding board. And once he made so much racket that Paddy went up the bank through the gap in the trees. He stayed for more than an hour, but I certainly was not going over to the Crimmons Place to get him. Finally he came back down the bank with Rogers, and put him in the front bedroom. Paddy only said "He's an odd bastard. Rogers." The next morning, though, he turned Rogers out of the house. He did walk over to bring Rogers' car back to our place for him. Sometimes I could look over at the place and just think it was mean that the Crimmons Place could thrive. The lawns were cut sometimes by Bundy's people. Whenever he thought he had someone to look at it I suppose. And my children picked flowers in the round gardens. They were forbidden of course. And the trees along the drive-way long ago crushed the board railings that were first set

around them. They look odd now, curving around with that gap on the ledge of the bank.

But then when Paddy and I found out that Bundy had sneaked people into the Crimmons Place, we had sturdy reason to be alarmed. More than alarmed I can say. "I think Bundy has put some more pigs out on the Crimmons Place, Dee-Dee." Paddy smiled a short smile, though a pleasant one. Paddy has a way of looking extremely charming at all the wrong times. He got up and scraped his boot free on the boot-jack, then walked into the heated closet and slammed the door. Water was running far to the front of the house behind several closed doors. I heard Val scream softly as Beatrice slipped her into the tub. When I got up from the dressing table after I finished combing out my hair, I ran. We threw a terrycloth robe on Val and left the two children together. Then I practically pushed Beatrice down the front stairs, telling her quickly that there really were people in the Crimmons Place, lights on everywhere, and that they had sent one of their people over to our place. Then I looked out a front window to see if I could get a look at the gray haired child before she got onto the porch. But I saw her fly around the side of the house, for Lord's sakes, didn't even touch the porch. I ran the length of the house and had settled half-way down the kitchen steps before either Beatrice or the child from the Crimmons Place got to the kitchen door. I had time to sit down on the widest step where the stairwell curves and I could peer around and stay hidden. Beatrice

walked into the kitchen before the child started to knock on the screen. But Beatrice waited some time, just standing in the darkened doorway to the pantry. When she started forward she said "come in" in a tone I had never heard before. As if she were daring the child to walk in our kitchen. Chipper and Rafferty trotted in when Beatrice opened the door, but when it closed the child was standing farther away on the porch. I could only see her face lit up by the kitchen light, pale with smoky yellow hair framing her face, but the strands hanging over her shoulder away from the light were gray. Hair stood away from her face in confused directions as if she were still running. She was older by a few years than Val, older than Val or Padraic, which was a relief to me because my children would not be interested in her. Perhaps ten, and frightened. I wanted Beatrice to say something comforting to her, in that pleasant tone she saves for any of the dogs when they are hurt. But even though Beatrice surprised me a little I could easily understand her. She has always adopted our opinions, and when I was growing up, she had the same opinions as Mother. She even gives me two dollars to bet on Paddy when I go off with him to the races. And I bring her back more money, though it is absurd of her to think I would place a bet.

"Ah'm Lou Ann Culclasure, and we just moved in across the way." She waved in a vague turn of her wrist toward my barns, obviously turned around from her circle of our house.

She paused with a shortness of breath and Beatrice opened the screen again. I leaned farther around the corner of the stairwell, but I would have had to sit on the bottom stair to see her at full length. Beatrice held the door open until the child had to come in. As she passed I got an impression of blue and purple and green stripes flash down her legs. Her outfit made her look like the Bay of Naples, for lord's sake. I saw the mud on her knees and hands where she fell down the bank. Lou stood in the middle of Beatrice's scrubbed kitchen, "If Y'all are eating supper I can come back another time", and she started to back toward the screen again. She felt Chipper behind her and jumped.

"What is it?" Beatrice insisted. I would have slapped her had she used that tone to me.

"Um. Mama wants to know if she could borry a soup pot and a oven dish, please. But I can come back if you're busy or I'm sure mama can make do." She was out of my range. But Beatrice's voice stopped her shuffle to the door. "I have the utensils." Then, "Is there something else you need, food?" I would have slapped her. The child came back into the middle of the kitchen smiling for the first time. "No uh-uh. We got food in the Lincoln. And we got sleeping bags in case the moving people don't get up here in time. But Mama only brought one pan." Beatrice was at the door ahead of Lou with the pots. The child took them and was down the porch steps."I'll get them back right away. Thank you."

"Where are you from" Beatrice raised her voice.

"Smyrna" She called from the dark porch.

"Smyrna" Paddy howled from the top of the stairs. "Where the hell is Smyrna? But they got food in the lincoln." He laughed loud and pleasantly. The way he should not have done, but the way he always did at a time like that. And even though he had to sweat for half the night in the closet, he came down the stairs offering to pour for Beatrice and me in the living room.

Before we went to bed I gave Beatrice instructions to keep the children away from the Crimmons Place. Then for the next two weeks Paddy and I did not mention Culclasure or Crimmons, and I don't think they were on his mind once. He rode Mike and Evelyn Shaw's two colts, not poorly, but he was weak from losing that much weight in one night. And he clubbed one colt twice over the ears. I saw it from the stands, but the officials missed it. But then I was looking for something like it because I knew he was in rather a vicious mood. The colt was a crazy fool anyway, but Paddy never left the saddle when the colt stumbled, and came down over the water jump. Paddy was clinging to him and the way Paddy was taking chances I could hardly tell which of them was the crazy fool.

But then seven wins out of nine races is never going to make Paddy cry. We brought the Shaws back with us and Teddy Voss and Teddy's brother to our place afterwards. It was not

promising to be a party I could invite Mother to, so I called ahead to have her take Beatrice and the children back to her place. I was getting nervous with Paddy's friends more rowdy than usual, and the Culclasures across the way, and probably Rogers Smith Crimmons on our front porch as he always managed to be when I went off to the races with Paddy. It was practically dark when we got home. Yet I could clearly see a thin child mowing the yard, light green paths around a black oval of shaggy grass. The children were in the front paddock with Dappy and Pepper, and no one in sight to watch them. And to make everything more lovely, Teddy and his brother had driven in ahead of us. They were lounging in the living room with Mother there, too. She was sitting on the sofa and the Vosses keeping her company though they already had a good headstart on the party. "You saw the Culclasure boy in front" she offered us as greeting. "Dixie Culclasure." She added. Paddy exploded, then subsided into chortles "for Gods sakes, Dixie."

"Quiet, you could be heard" she raised her voice to warn as the power mower came along side the front porch. "Well" she flounced back in the sofa, hair beginning to frizz. Evelyn and Mike came in and Paddy poured for everybody. Then Mother was primed to begin "Life has its vicissitudes, children" she looked sharply at Teddy Voss who was making considerably more noise than the power mower. "Children, the Culclasure children want to learn to ride, there are three of them, or

four, and they have been in the front paddock for two ghastly weeks. Those people, something must be done."

"Dee-Dee'll teach them, put them to work Dee." Paddy slapped me on the neck, "Looks as if your mother has already got one of them hired."

"I?" Mother's voice rose to drone out the power mower. Then she subsided into dangerous, low tones. "Padraic, Beatrice allowed him to mow the lawn because the little creature asked her if he could. 'To make it up for hanging round the barn' as he said it."

I wanted to hear what Mother said, afraid she had involved us with the Crimmons Place people. And by that time, Mother would know their life histories for two generations back, though at the time I might have doubted that the Culclasures had any histories that ran back even two generations. But the Channings and some losing jockies were coming onto the porch and the Crashaw twins' station wagon had pulled up. Mother simply had to go, quickly, with the children. I called Beatrice to pack them up, thinking to send Beatrice with them to Mother's place. I had Mother convinced she should leave, and she had no idea that the Vosses were already drunk, I don't think, anyway.

Everything looked as if it would straighten itself out except then there was an ungodly shriek and Paddy was out the door to make a run for the barns. I thought it might be Val. But by the time I could reach the front door, I ran into Paddy

coming back in. Even Teddy Voss was aware that something was wrong. Paddy had an unconcerned grin on his face which was ablaze with windburn. It made him look rather drunk. "That Culclasure boy ran over himself with his lawnmower. He was trying to push the damn thing up the bank, and it came down on top of him." But the child was screaming as if his foot had been severed.

"Well Paddy, go see what is the matter with him, will you?"

"Well for gods sake," as if he had not thought of that himself. He disappeared with a glass still in his hand, just as Ben Waters drove onto the lawn. There were cars parked at odd angles across the driveway, one with its lights on. Paddy hopped onto the porch as Ben climbed it from the other side.

"The Culclasure boy cut three of his toes off. It's a bloody mess. Hi Ben. Rode Evelyn's colt to win yester-"

"Cut off his toes." Ben was off into the dusk toward the screaming boy. But Mother was on the porch too. "Children, I am calling the practitioner. It will be fine." Paddy was grinning amiably at me. Yet he breathed in my ear with an air of secrecy, "Deirdre, think you better call a doctor before your mother gets a damn priest out here to heal him. Priest won't stop that squalling."

When I got the phone away from Mother promising to call her Christian scientist myself for her, Ben had the Crimmons

Place boy on the couch bleeding on my blue hook rug. "Reminds me of the time your mare got shredded across the flank when we tried to pasture breed her to Ben's stud!" Paddy was bending over examining the foot "Little boy, you just cut off three of your toes." Dixie screamed and increased tears made brown lines down each cheek. The lawn mower was still going. "My mama, I want my mama."

"Oh, yeah, can you wrap a towel over his foot and mouth, somebody better take him over to the Crimmons." Teddy was bending over the foot, too. "Paddy did you really try to pasture breed to Ben's stud? You crazy fool, it's a wonder you have a mare left."

Ben lifted Dixie in his arms. I tried to say something nice to the little boy, and stop the flood onto my hook rug with a kitchen towel, but the child was so loud, and the towel was already sopping. His left foot was green stained from grass and the other one was ghastly. "Look, I'll drive him, Deirdre." Ben looked concerned. "Can you get something else to keep the blood off my car?"

When Ben came back, Beatrice had the children and Mother on their way over to her place in somebody's car. The last car in the driveway. I don't know whose it was. And the Christian scientist practitioner had come and gone quickly. Paddy had asked him out to see my mare. It was not that I minded Paddy's parties, up to a point, but they were talking

horses and the language was beginning to deteriorate. I was beginning to weary of it and worse, Rogers Smith Crimmons had come in with some young girl who could have been his grandchild. Paddy was in a fighting mood and Teddy Voss was asleep behind the sofa. So I hardly noticed the man when he came in. The Crimmons Place man. He had flowered orange shorts on and a sports shirt to match. Fat, with colored sandals and socks in a diamond pattern. He had been ringing the bell apparently a long time before Ben noticed him. "Sorry to worry Y'all, but do you have flood lights at the front of your house."

"Good evening, Mr. Culclasure" Ben said.

"Hi, um forgotten your name. Ben. That's right. Good to see you. Thank-you for bringing my boy home."

Paddy stopped in the middle of a wordy sentence to stare. "You see I got to find my son's toes." Mr. Culclasure said. He extended a large hairy hand to Paddy. "Lunceford is the name, Lunch, they call me. Good to know you." Paddy went out in the yard with his friends behind him. Flashlights and beacons blinked everywhere. Lunch stood in the doorway with Rogers, and they seemed to know one another. I tried to get out into the yard but Rogers caught my arm. "Did you meet Anne? This is Mr. Culclasure's eldest daughter." Only then did I stop to look at the child with him. She was fair with white blond hair, obviously not her own. And a sundress louder than her father's outfit, though it was fashionable, I suppose. I mean it may have cost a ridiculous sum.

The evening could have been no more outrageous even when Paddy came in with two toes in his hand. "Next to an azalea bush near the bottom of the bank. Looked so damn much like little white and pink flowers, is why we missed them. Evening to you Culclasure. You can go now."

Ben followed him in the door with another pale toe. "Look here, that's all of 'em" Paddy added, "you wouldn't be interested in a night cap, I don't suppose." The flowered man had the flowered daughter by the arm and the toes in his hand. I was tired enough not to care what Paddy said. I even thought that if he did offend the man we would be done with it. And I saw it coming. The man smiled into the light of the porch, still grasping his daughter who was vehemently trying to pull away. "If you folks got need of a dip in the morning, we got our pool filled and working okay." He stepped back into the dark. "And thanks again for seeing my son home, Ben," he called. Paddy was out the door again climbing the bank up to the Crimmons Place, and our house full of people behind him. "DEE-Dee, we're going for a swim. Ride on friends of mine." Someone even got Rogers moving at a canter up the hill. Ben went home. I know he is dearly fond of Paddy, only I think that he prefers him out hunting and definitely not at a race party. Sometimes Ben is like that. I was left alone in my house with Teddy asleep behind the sofa and blood on my blue hook rug. The flood lights came on at the Crimmons Place, creating their own haze, just like the light over an ugly city,

the way you can see it from a distance.

Perhaps we might have let it end at that, with the Culclasures on their side of the bank and we on ours. After all the Crimmons Place was only twenty-four acres of lawn. You could see their entire property at one leisurely glance.

Paddy woke up typically after his party, apologizing for the race crowd he brought here. And decided we could spend a vacation schooling for the hunt season and give the children some help. Maybe give Lassiter to Teddy's son and find a larger pony for Val. She was beginning to need something that could jump more truly.

I did not realize Beatrice was away with the children until a knock on the kitchen screen became ridiculously persistent. Paddy went down because he was dressed in the same clothes he had worn to his party.

"Mr. Fitzhugh, my mama sent me over here with this for you, and she wants to know if you can come over to dinner at three o'clock."

"No."

"Paddy," I called from the top of the stairs.

"What is your name little girl? Come in."

"Lou Ann Culclasure, My brother, Dixie-"

"I know" Paddy said.

When I came into the kitchen the gray headed child was still at the screen, but her hair was neatly pressed in long

braids down each shoulder. She wore a yellow dress with ruffles and black patent shoes. I smiled as I drew her into the kitchen. She responded with a large grin and thrust a wax papered pan into my arms. "It's peach cobbler. Mama makes them best."

"Are you going to have fried chicken for dinner at three?" Paddy propped himself against the sink with hands dangling and legs stuck out and his hair in an uproar.

"I don't know, Sir. Mr. Crimmons is coming so it'll be special. Maybe chicken, but maybe roast beef."

Paddy straightened "Rogers is going to be there? Well I'll be damned."

She started back toward the door. "Yessir, He has been in the azalea bushes under my sister's window all morning, so mama thought to ask him and since y'all are cousins."

"Look, Lou" Paddy had her by both elbows, "why don't I walk back with you, and find old Rogers. I am afraid I can't join you for chicken. I've, we've an appointment."

She relaxed once more under Paddy's smile "Okay. Mama sent the cobbler in case you might have one, an appointment. And Mama said to tell she's grateful for you seeing about Dixie and getting his toes and all. Do you know they sewed them right back on. Is your appointment to ride horses?" She was completely loose, beaming at Paddy.

"Yes. To ride horses."

"Is that all you folks do? That would be nice to do that."

"Paddy, smooth your hair." I said.

He stayed at the Crimmons Place until I thought he really was going to sit down to a chicken dinner. But he came down the bank with Rogers just before three. He came in smiling, but that was no indication of whether he had been cordial to the Culclasures. He could smile and still say the wrong thing. Yet all he said about the Culclasures was that he had promised he would get me to teach their children to ride which incensed me until I heard what we were charging them. And then he said, "Old Rogers is taking the Crimmons Place people for a long ride." Even so Paddy had taken it upon himself to get him out of the Crimmons Place azaleas. And after I thought about it I little minded the involvement. It was only the children and I did charge them a marvelous sum for the lessons. Soon they were taking the ponies cross country by themselves, and when I schooled my mare I liked to have them with me. Lunch Culclasure wanted us to swim whenever we wanted. His wife even got so she called to tell us when the water was going to be emptied. I was surprised but she did it in a casual way, and never said she was afraid some of Paddy's friends would take a leap some night and crack their heads. Of course we never dined with them, chicken dinner. And the Culclasures came to understand their situation rather well. Mother was never reconciled, but that was to be expected. She found out from the real estate people that Lunch Culclasure was a restaurant man who had a real genius for that sort of thing

and had become president of a whole restaurant chain. That horrified Mother so much that she suggested I let the children live with her in the summer. Absurd. My children were too young to become involved with the Crimmons Place people. The only thing that worried me was the eldest daughter. The Culclasures had moved into our country especially so the girl could meet the "right" people. But then they came to understand that there were no restaurant people for them here. I had to make her see that her children could not hunt in brown leather jackets. And we swam in the "gloaming" as Mrs. Culclasure put it. I really think we could have coexisted indefinitely had it not been for Rogers Crimmons.

I had no idea what he was doing until I took Lou and Dixie with me to the races. I had them fairly well trained. They knew how to shake hands, and say how do you do, though I only allowed them to perform for Mother. I managed well enough by taking them to the paddocks to show them the horses Paddy was to ride, to avoid introducing them. It was a pleasant day, shining. Paddy hated one of his mounts, but he was confident. He would always rather ride in the cross country races, but I could hardly take the Culclasure children with me to one of them. It was better to take them to the timber races set up like an outside course, around a flat track. Lou was always frightened about one thing or another, afraid she would do something wrong. She had absolutely no grace, but she was useful in keeping her brother quiet.

The first race ran well. Paddy second on Tom Frederick's bay. The course was dry. Sunshine reflected off the white fence around the grass oval with the green so bright that it looked artificial. It was broiling on the course because it was even hot in our shadowed seats. And I knew what sort of words the jockies were throwing at one another. Paddy's mouth was working and I knew how he was talking. Especially when he got stuck in a pocket behind three other horses. And he was riding that gray fool he hated. Not that he wasn't fast, the fastest horse in the race, and they all knew it. That was why those three horses closed in front of him to make the pocket. But the gray was mean, he fought all the time, and he was so rough Paddy had a wretched time controlling his direction. The children were squirming in the heat, and Lou tugged my arm when Paddy was trying to find a way through the three horses. As they came to a wide brush jump the three damn horses were bunched dangerously, and when one went down they all did. Paddy was turning into the jump, and surely it looked as if he would come down in that horrible mess of horses and men.

"Hey Dee-Dee, there's Rogers and my sister Anne. Down at the rail, see?" Lou pointed toward the exposed crowd below. "See the blue straw hat and the flowers?" The three horses were down and I could see Edgar Channing under his horse on the far side of the jump. Paddy's gray rose to take

the jump as Edgar's horse scrambled to his feet. The riderless horse leapt forward clearing the way just as Paddy was coming over. But the crazy fool was fighting. Edgar rolled into the brush to miss the gray's hooves. Paddy had used all his strength to veer the gray to the clear place, and the gray was fighting against him, at the same time trying to keep his balance. The horse stumbled and came down but Paddy was still on his back when he rose. The rest of the field was hopelessly ahead, but Paddy was so furious he beat the animal matching his rage with the gray's own temper.

"Dee-Dee" the stupid girl tugged again, "Look at the steeplechase horse without a rider. He's jumped into the middle track. Can he do that?"

Edgar Channing's horse was running at an angle from the field. He ran across the green center and it looked as if he were going to jump the white fence back onto the timber track. Lou and Dixie were laughing, pointing, swaying as giggles rippled over them. Paddy was still behind the field, and the loose horse was over the white fence across the flat track and he jumped into the midst of the timber horses as they came around the curve. The loose horse hit the nearest running horse in about the middle of his flank spinning him to the ground. Teddy Voss's wife had risen in the next box to grip the rail. The impact sprawled three horses as the one hit by Edgar's horse spun into their paths, like a bowling ball. The loose horse was lying motionless at the rail. The stands were

quiet. Paddy passed the downed horses to the right fighting that damned gray the while. The two children cheered, and I don't know, but I turned around and slapped Dixie.

"Don't do that to him" Lou said, horrified, but then she noticed the quiet, "are those horses going to be all right?" I thought it was Teddy Voss that the ambulance picked up first. His wife left the box and ran down the steps toward the track. I was only glad that I didn't have to run. I sat down and the stands started to murmur quietly.

"He didn't mean anything by laughing, Dee-Dee. Rogers was doing it." I looked toward the crowd in the sun. Rogers had the Culclasure girl by the arm. He was laughing hysterically and waving directly at me. "Will that horse get up, Dee-Dee? Will that one down there that jumped the white fence get up?" Lou persisted.

I walked down the steps into the sun with those Culclasure children following me. "Go away" I turned around. But the girl tugged my purse strap. "We want to stay with you, Dee-Dee, we're sorry." I went to the exercise paddock and found Paddy leaning against the fence. "Dee, let's go. You drive me home, all right?" It was dark when we got back, and Paddy was very tired. Only once did the Culclasure boy say something to him. "Mr. Fitzhugh, is all you do ride horses for a living? I wish I could do that."

All that year the Culclasures lived on the Crimmons Place

and I was fooling with their children. Rogers was busy preening the eldest daughter. He took her everywhere, introduced her to everyone and actually was planning for her coming out. Not that the girl really understood the word but he got the Culclasures to enter her in the "right" school, and actually Rogers did know the right people. His father did have good horses, Paddy even rode one of them. So it must not have been hard to fool those people, lord knows they never did know anything at all.

They had gardeners crawling about the lawns for weeks in preparation. It was stupid to see, but better perhaps than seeing Lunch on his tractor lawn mower with his flowered shorts and a long cigar hanging from his mouth. When they were through, even a small pony could not have survived with the run of all twenty-four acres for grazing. And Mrs. Culclasure worked in the little gardens herself, even had them enclosed in cement rungs painted white. By the time Mrs. Culclasure's 'gloaming' was fading, the restaurant Culclasures had their house lit up as if they were celebrating the fourth early. What they called their daughter's coming out was a party, more like someone's graduation party. The girl was never presented actually. But on her party night they had strung blue flood lights around the pool, and they certainly were trying awfully hard. Paddy and I watched from our porch while Val and Padraic rode in the front paddock. Cars were backed up to the gap in the trees on the bank before the children had their ponies hot. I let the

Culclasure children come in my kitchen because I wanted to hear their excited chatter about their sister's party.

"You have to hand it to Rogers" Paddy said, "I only wonder exactly what he expects out of it."

Before I could tell him to be quiet Lou spoke up. "Oh Rogers doesn't expect anything in return. He just likes my sister Anne alot and wanted to help with her party. Mama said he's the one made it possible."

"I see" Paddy said and motioned me into the living room for a drink. By midnight the haze was still hanging over the Crimmons Place and the noise from the poolside was outrageous. Cars lined the Valley Road for a quarter of a mile and there were people everywhere. Paddy was losing patience when someone knocked on our door. The small Culclasure children stood on the porch when Paddy opened the door, curious. "Could we talk to Dee-Dee maybe for a minute, Mr. Fitzhugh." It was minutes before I could get them to answer Paddy's questions as to why they were here.

"We were wondering if we could stay in your front bedroom tonight; we wouldn't get under the sheets or anything." The pale little girl looked at me, frightened. "All these people came into Anne's party that she didn't invite. There must be a thousand of them. And one man is floating on his stomach in the pool and some people threw meat patties in the water, and-"

"And some guys couldn't get into Daddy's liquor cabinet

so they went out to the garage and got an axe," Dixie added.

"Good god, Paddy" I said.

"Or we could bring our sleeping bags over. Mama was crying and all and Daddy was trying to get them away."

Paddy put his boots back on and started out the door with the dogs trotting behind. "You can stay here Lou. Dixie. Did you see Rogers over there?"

"He was, but he might have left" Lou whimpered and began to cry.

I put them in the front bedroom though they would only lie on the counterpane. By the time Paddy came back the Crimmons house was quiet. The lights were out because it was beginning to dawn. After the police cleared the people and cars away there was no way of telling what had happened earlier, except that there were two Culclasure children in my front bedroom. Rogers did not stumble in the door. Paddy held him by the back of his dinner jacket, though Rogers was smiling. "Dee-Dee, cousin Rogers has been playing games. I found him at the pub at Four Corners. He had been sending people to the Crimmons Place all night, telling them there was a hell of a big society party open to the public. His exact words." I looked at Rogers and knew he was drunk but there was a hard sober expression behind the drink loosened face. He had a satisfied expression as if he had just risen from a finely prepared meal. Paddy dumped him in the brown easy chair and he didn't say anything. Paddy looked angry. He stared at Rogers as if he were going

to say something taking in air in short sucks, the way he starts the sentence of a sudden thought. But he never said it. He turned around and brushed past me on his way up to bed, without much of any kind of expression on his face except that he was tired. I left Rogers sitting there, too. And haven't seen him since except a time we pulled his car out of the ditch on Valley Road. There was the shadow of a man around the Crimmons Place, black against the whitewashed brick of its broad and rambling front. The shadow walked up to the house's front in the amphitheatre of the driveway, and yelled at it. Then the Crimmons Place burned to the ground on a Tuesday night. A great red inferno, and it burned in crashing noises; the first big one sounded like an airplane had crashed in my front paddock. Ben had its foundation chopped away and smoothed over and we have a nice broad summer grazing for the brood mares. The grass is even better there where the house was for its heavy seeding. It is a pretty field except the curving double line of trees looks artificial up there on the bank. And the hole where the one tree is gone. Fire must have burned out bad memories and it was such a relief since we had all known from the beginning that the Crimmons Place was never meant to be.

THE POLO MATCH

THE POLO MATCH

Last is the child Cotton who collects impressions, but because they are child's impressions she has not come to understand. Noreen is her mother who is herself an action and has no impressions but they instantly become opinions expressed in action, yelling them, but little matter. Because the child never reacts to Noreen only to avoid her, without fear. Alicia is the main one I am telling about. I am Alicia's only daughter. I call her Al not when I am working away, only near home. The only one left is my father and he can tell himself. He always does.

She comes across the steps down into the dining room in a stride unbroken by the four steps in all. Al strides in wide steps, but slowly so you couldn't tell it under her Indian robe. Unless you knew Al a long time. Hot milk slops over the gold-rimmed teacup onto her heavy thumbs. She grips the thin china saucer firmly, carefully.

"She's a spoiled crowbait," Victor says. He is the cause of the milk, and the cause of the gold-rimmed teacup, although it isn't his money bought it.

"The child loves her," Al says. "It may be only women can ride her."

"Barrel guts of crowbait." He will say more but he twists his face sideways and sticks his wide stomach out,

pressing a hand underneath to his hurting back. He handles the hot milk from Al as if it is in a mug the way it ought to be, as if the gold-rimmed teacup will burst between his hands' pressure. He warms his hands to it. I would have looked up and grinned at Al, but he never looks up for her bringing hot milk. Probably cursing within because it is not fine brandy in an expensive snifter. The thin china cup is too hot for warming his hands. Al sits down and waits for it. I suppose I wait in a way although it is water off a duck's back what Victor says. I said he'd tell himself.

"Any horse that would stand gathering that much power under her going crazy is spoiled crowbait. I should have gotten off and clubbed her to sleep. And don't say I did too much twisting her ears and beating her back down. That didn't cause her craziness." He shakes his head once downward, as if water is coming off.

Al is not about to say it. She is looking into the dining room, through it and beyond to somewhere I can't see from where I sit. In grandfather's house the dining room table was rich and smooth and gray. And grandmother's silver shone like fineness. She would pause with the warm-shining spoon hesitating between the plate and her lips. Victor has to eat with it every night but handles it cruelly. Nothing gets away with being fine in our house.

"Look here. A horse is not one damn bit of good if only one little girl can ride her. That mare will put up

with the child long enough to suit herself and then she'll go crazy under her and ping! We'll be out of business." He pauses among words to sip the hot milk. Victor has been itching to curse. He can think up disgusting words to avoid cursing, it's a thing turns Al sick to hear. I wish he would curse instead. Damn means a powerful lot to him, it's as bad as he ever gets around Al. The phrases he uses instead are worse to hear and he knows it. Victor is the sort would poke a dog for licking him.

He is arguing with himself, maybe hearing what we are thinking and answering a defense. He is not even aware yet that Al and I have not said a word. Victor knows he shouldn't have gotten on Cotton's mare. Then he went to poloing her and she exploded. I know she is a hard mare to understand. A puppy will go to raking its teeth into you jumping on you with sharp nails, all the time wagging its tail happily. So you don't know where to start. You cuff it and it goes and sits under a tree, hurt, not understanding. Cotton's mare gets frightened when you fool too hard with her mouth—I think is why. She will go to backing up, you kick her and she stops and starts building up this power under her belly until she will go over backward into a wire fence or worse. But she only does it when she's handled roughly.

"Get her backed up in the corner of something solid and beat her out on a straightaway. If it hadn't been a wire fence back there I would have cured her for good, maybe." I surely

think he is going to crush that teacup into one thousand pieces. Cotton and everyone thinks the mare was cowboyed and worked half dead. It is mostly a man can't ride her. I say let her go easy with Cotton and the child will cure her if Victor will just stay away.

"It isn't she's had too rough a treatment, she's been spoiled rotten, too easy a life, like your life, hey Pat?" I knew he was suffering to get me to say something but I am not going to say it. Trying to smile, make me take it as a joke. And he is getting to look uncomfortable with me just looking at him.

"Let me have a cigar, Al, will you, this milk isn't doing any good." He's turned his uncomfortable look into a hurt face. His back might hurt him some at that. He hasn't thought of Cotton's mare's hurt yet. He probably wants a toddy brought to him the way Grandfather always had Grandmother do. She scoots the silver box along the coffee table so he can reach out a cigar.

"Hammerhead. Roachbacked crowbait," Victor spits out with the end of the cigar.

Al gets up pulling the cord of the robe tighter. I heard Victor once tell a hayer that Al was a hundred pound sack of mixed feed from the waist down and a seventy-five pound sack from the waist up. I wish I could have seen Al in her prime, like the painting of her on Pinwheel. Her hair is honey yellow and Pinwheel is the deepest blood bay. Velvety skin with a

coat on it only good breeding can build. A rich blood brown. A head high, half turned as if he has just noticed you looking up at him. And Mama sitting with a sure quiet, a honey braid framing her face. She is Mama in the picture and where I'm away working if I mention her. I suppose then I am thinking of the picture, too. It is true that the grass is a little too green but the rest is just like a photograph. I would loved to have seen her.

When Victor would go off for a day or more delivering some hay or stock, Grandmother would come. And one time after Grandfather passed on she brought the painting. Another time she had the harpsichord sent and all the things Al loved as a girl until one by one dowdy things Victor could earn were replaced by the fine. Only they never looked right. Al and I never felt right perhaps because it took Grandfather's death to get for Victor all the things he had wanted to begin with. But Al never complained, so I couldn't although I was the one didn't get to go to Foxhill School the way Grandfather sent Uncle Ben's child. But I never thought about things like that back then. I thought the best times were when I'd run into the house and there would be everything quiet and orderly because Grandmother was sitting in her chair with the wooden arms and the green seat and back no one sat in but her. We none of us are sitting in it now. It's by itself pushed back next to the corner desk. It was always a grand surprise to have Grandmother there. I could never tell until I saw her

sitting in the chair. She didn't drive a car herself. She would come and talk about Al's showing on Pinwheel or the days that were bright for her. She could tell it so warmly I would feel that I was there. And even after I started showing horses myself I felt Al's day was finer, because she didn't have to turn professional or anything. When Uncle Ben moved into the big manor house they found Al's room all locked up and not touched since she had left it. It had a fireplace and there were old faded rosettes hanging on a string across the mantel from shows she had won on Pinwheel. The silver cup with a place of honor in the middle of the mantel.

Grandmother would open up with a kind of exclamation. "Pinwheel." It would startle you the first time you heard it. Startled me every time long after the picture had hung there with her visits growing in number. Not frequency.

"Pinwheel! Do you remember Alicia's first national event?" Then she would say something like "before all this Polo tragedy," and shake her head. But recover with a perky "Well" and give her rings a little shake. I believe Grandmother was the most noble lady I ever saw. Her hair was silver and combed so soft you couldn't see an individual strand but it was all of a puff around her head. "Alicia, you did look grand. And Pinwheel. Lacey had every brad polished silver bright and he dusted your boots after you had mounted. I have never seen such a fine sight." Grandmother put down the teacup and clapped her hands, then put them up toward her lips as if she were going to pray.

"Colonel Hoy said, 'Mrs. Waters, I have never seen a more splendid combination since I last saw you riding your gray. Alicia is sure to represent Elkridge-Loudoun handsomely.'" And Colonel Hoy looking at Pinwheel standing quietly for the inspection. The judge turning the saddle flaps back trying to find a hardened bump of dirt somewhere. Hardly expecting to, though. Pinwheel was a born hunter. A seven-eights bred, which makes a more sensible animal. Yet his dressage would expectedly be his greatest trial. But on the opening day of the event Pinwheel proved himself. "Alicia rode without flaw. Without flaw." Grandmother's voice went up as if she had been pinched. But that was her way of showing extreme pleasure. She flounced up in her chair in a tiny little hop then fell to telling it all over again.

But it takes the two to give the picture. Grandmother was outside of it and her pride made her view lopsided. I understand better since I have ridden, myself, and seen girls like Al was with their own groom and tack room and all. It might be like me being the only rider for Mr. Chadwick-Taylor's show stable. No, not even then. Because it was all done for the pleasure of Al. With no one considering cost or profit, or lowering it to a business transaction, where you draw a wage according to how your horse places. It is not difficult to understand. Because Alicia was her only girl. And Grandmother had the kind of life she could fill up with her children. She didn't have to work at anything, except perhaps planning

the hunt breakfasts. And Grandfather the master of Elkridge-Loudoun. Al couldn't help but win the national rally. Major Anglington teaching her and all. Oh, it must have been fine.

In the other direction you couldn't take Al's word for the way it was. While Grandmother was proud and kind of dreamy, Al would claim modesty and throw some of the credit off on Kate. Al damaged herself doing that. You have got to take what is yours. You got to, or nobody else will, the way I see it. Every time Al would say, "Oh, it was Kate who made it possible." Kate didn't pick the dam and sire of Pinwheel, did she. Or put up the hours Lacey did or Major Anglington. But then, I might have said something to all of Grandmother's remembering. Yet I think Al enjoyed it. She glowed kind of, not saying anything but the way people do when they try not to smile too much. Just too pleased, though, to keep it from shining out of their eyes.

Kate went to Foxhill with Al. Al was paying and Kate's father kept the horses. Kate rode for Foxhill is all. The only thing she had must have been her memory. Maybe she made the pretense of passing at Foxhill by stealing tests and memorizing the answers. Or maybe she just rode and they let her stay on. I don't know the particulars. But I do know that Al quit Foxhill because Grandfather became master of Elkridge-Loudoun and Al would have missed the best hunts in the country if she hadn't quit. With Grandfather master he didn't need hounds to give good chase to a fox. He knew the land, and more

than that he knew every fox. Everyone says Uncle Ben can't ride half the way Grandfather used to. Not and give the most exciting kind of rides to the field. Kate didn't quit Foxhill, though. Because she was thrown out on her ear. The same kind as Noreen. Blood tells in funny ways. It happened that Kate was representing Foxhill on a professional three day event horse. I don't care what anyone says about Foxhill, they show around for money and prestige to get more rich children enrolled. Kate was hardly more than a weak tool. She wouldn't have quit of her own choice except everyone came to know the reason for it. The reason for it is outside turning out the brood mares this minute. Only thing she ever knew was her dressage. She had a kind of memory. During the three day event Al and Kate were housed together in Colonel Hoy's own house. It had a swimming pool with a little garden and high shrubs around. Al and Kate would come in after the day's riding and swim at night. There was a hooked rug in the bedroom they shared and Kate and Al walked the dressage test out on that hooked rug. It was the old kind with blue and white coils. Al can sit back in the tack room now, and remember to her students about the swimming pool and the rug, and it is the very same dressage test she has all of them learn. And sometimes when Al gets things on her mind around in the kitchen or somewhere she mumbles a recitation of it. Kind of smiling to herself. I smile to myself when I hear her and it makes me feel good to know what she is enjoying thinking about. It was all Al's modesty caused the

story that Kate helped her to win. Because Al beat hell out of her in cross country and stadium jumping, not just the dressage. She should never have told the part about Kate helping her. She told it once when Noreen was still coming to dinner. "Yeah, that's the way my mother told it to me," Noreen said. I think that is what tore it between Noreen and me. That remark was the beginning of it. Just give a coarse girl like Noreen a kind word and she'll throw it off at you. She'll toss it off the way she does her food with her two forearms hovering over her plate, with elbows just off the table cloth. The way Victor eats.

The first time I saw Noreen she came to the kitchen door. I was sitting near the table playing with the kittens that were hopping around on it, licking my fingers. She came up to the screen saying, "I am Kate Graham's daughter, I'm Noreen. She said you and her were school chums." Al was going to let her work around the riding school, grooming, mucking out. No. Victor comes along and puts her on a hay truck, takes her on delivery trips. "Timonium to Aiken, I seen 'em all," Noreen still says. And she doesn't look any different from the day I was playing with the kittens. It shows about Noreen even in the way she came around to the kitchen door first. I know Noreen. "My mother told me how you all were school chums. She taught you dressage, remember?" And Al would look at her nicely. And Noreen says dressage the way people say garbage.

Noreen is made like a piece of whipcord. She has muscles in her upper arms from throwing hay onto trucks, shoving shavings into stalls, pushing horses around—her favorite trick is

to put a young horse on a long line, let him feel his freedom to run in a wide circle, all the time she is taking in the line so he hardly notices, then she throws her weight back on her heels and jerks hell out of him as soon as he goes into a good-natured buck. If you see her standing around she is biting black dirt that gathers around the nubs on her fingers. Noreen doesn't have a fingernail to her name. Once she came in the house and threw herself down in Grandmother's chair.

Noreen has a white-blonde thatch that scraggles around her ears leaving no hair in front of them. She's got blue eyes and she is lean, power kneaded into a spring box. And Noreen isn't five feet tall hardly. She is tough. Give her that. She worked right along throwing hay, mucking out—Victor let her teach sometimes at the riding school over Al's protest—right along until time for her to have the child. Al was fine about it. I believe it was like Grandmother who stayed away from us because of Victor and always formal to Al except when she talked about her childhood. But to me Grandmother was warm and even though I had Victor's blood anyone could tell she loved me. She gave me the Freeman's Silver colt that I turned professional on later. When you're a generation away from sorrow it isn't as hard to forgive the fruit of it. Al loves Noreen's girl and I swear it but I am fond of Cotton myself. She can get something good out of that crazy mare if anyone can.

Victor leans back in his deep chair and smoke curls up around his face and lifts in a film spreading toward the ceiling. He has got to complaining about the riding school, how it is handled. I don't like to hear Victor complaining so bitterly, knowing he will get to the way it should be done, with the money going into a fine stud probably to sire polo ponies, without Victor saying it, but the idea is in his head. It never has been out of his head for all the years. His face is hard and he looks beaten against the soft colors in the chair. Grandfather naturally would have sat in that chair, if he had come to the house. He ought to have, it was his chair long before Victor came by it. I get up and walk back to the kitchen. Al stays back in the living room and I feel her watching me going across her line of vision where she has been staring into the dining room. I eat a carrot Cotton's got put up for the horses. She has enough put up to choke the lot of horses we've got on the place. We had trouble with blood worms year or so ago, found Cotton had been giving them whole plates of granulated sugar. Above what we knew she had got for them in lumps. I caught her going out with a cake pan full and old Sultan was standing at the rose fence. He leaned over the briars and she stuck her arms through the tops of them. He blew out a spray of sugar from the pan and then fell to licking the whole thing up. Must have been a half pound of sugar she gave him. I can still hear Victor's voice; he's back to Cotton's

mare again. He always knows when he better not start getting personal and hasn't for years talked about his barn help, or anything from Grandfather's day. He's raised his voice so I can hear. Victor's half talk.

Victor and Noreen work together like a two man team. Her working right up next to him in the field. It was pretty much a hopeless situation before Noreen came, so she didn't change things terrifically, I suppose. But after Noreen was Cotton and it was out in the open how we were and we had to keep on the best we could. Al and I. We had to stay on or the blood we have of Grandmother and Grandfather would be thinned. To be carried on in Uncle Ben's family, but to dead end in ours. We had to stay on and protect what was ours. The fine furniture, the house, fight to keep the barns painted and the horses from getting spoiled. Noreen may have tried to fix up some, but it had the effect of poor people putting blankets of flowers in a yard that is already a pile of junk. Flowers growing right up around rusted car parts and tin cans. And we had to fight to keep Victor from putting the money from the school into a polo string. He never has seemed to of found the time to get over that. Victor and Noreen working like a team of workers in the field. Noreen never tried much to get into Al's life, but I worked the same place and hours she did. Ever since she made those remarks to Al about dressage I never had a use for Noreen. And I ended it with her short and sweetly.

Victor and Noreen and Cotton, we were all taking a van of horses up to summer camp for Al to teach on. I was going to live up there with Al and I wanted to go make sure my gray rode safely and unloaded all right. Cotton and I rode in back. When she got sick riding in back I banged on the window for them to stop. So I had to sit back with Noreen. I just sat on a box with my arms between my knees. "Why didn't you just name the child Victoria?" I say to her. That's all I said. She stood up as high as she could with the heads of the first three horses coming over the partition and three ropes crossing over us. "Why don't you keep your filthy tongue in your head?" And she pummeled me with her fist on my left shoulder and across my throat on the left side. Noreen could never say without acting. Victor could never act without adding a thousand words in a string after him.

But I come back here after each circuit despite Noreen or Victor. I never have left Al except to work. I have my grandparents' blood in me and I am good on a horse. I have an important job in the Green Mountains at Mr. Edmund Chadwick-Taylor's show stables. I am built a little like Al but the full coat hides where I am too wide and bunches out where I am too narrow. I look great on a horse. I've made a place for myself, even if it is not the one I deserve, that was guaranteed me. Victor and Noreen never even had a claim on a place. They are a fringe who just tried to push open a place for themselves.

I can remember how the years were before I understood how it was. The stories I heard are small in my mind. Like Al's first national event that should have been the beginning for her. It was only real when my Grandmother told it. It could have been a gentle life. But the blue hook rug and Kate and Al walking out dressage on it—they're the size of a thumbnail, in a box in my head. The dressage ring, the stadium course, and all the cross country courses they rode on are the size of a spur head. It doesn't come to be real. All that is real are my dressage rings and courses. In my mind I see a brush jump or a crazy red bulls-eye hanging across a stadium jump. My horse coming up close to it, my awareness of being in the air and coming down balanced so neither front foot takes too much shock of the landing. I can shut my eyes and feel the rock of my gray under me, feel the leather in my fingers. This mess of a house and the riding school are then a gray box in my head when I can leave for work. And I don't think about Victor sweating with the hay. Al standing in the middle of the schoolring calling polite corrections to her brother's children or camp children or in the big ring Victor made with an airplane hangar for a top. And Cotton growing up somewhere in the background.

I used to guess how Victor could have looked to Al when he showed up at Grandfather's house. For the only polo match Grandfather ever held on his land. He had a turf course laid out and manicured. Then he had a slim dirt field for practicing down behind where Uncle Ben keeps the new kennel now.

Up shows Victor, wiry, talkative, ready to be a player with Uncle Ben and Mr. Warick. Al standing on the side watching Victor, his quickness, his flashiness on a galloping pony, and Grandfather's team showing up better than the real visiting team, because Victor was saving them. All proceeds to Elkridge-Loudoun so they could make a big charity gift. A real exhibition game. Grandfather bought two Weimaraners to sit out near the polo green and be watched as Grandfather sat very near them. Grandfather didn't know anything about it except it was for show, and it excited Uncle Ben. But the harm was already done. Victor got to roughing it too much, making Uncle Ben's inexperience show up, and Victor turned his horse full tilt over the boards. Broke his own neck and the horse got bloody gashes along his side where he split the boards he came down so terribly hard. Grandfather felt responsible or maybe Al had something to do with it by then. They doctored him and Al was suckered by his roughness, mistaking it for some gallant flair or some such nonsense. Al could have been a great horsewoman and married a gentleman like her father. Grandfather went back to hunting the way his father always did, and got back where he belonged and had his place. But Al was lost and Victor must have thought he was in for a sweet life. To me just another small gray box put somewhere in my head with the rest of the stories. I can go back to Vermont and maybe marry a horseman who can put me on a ranch in Texas maybe. It won't be the life meant for Al

and me, but it will be gentler than this.

I go back through the dining room running my finger along Grandmother's table. I see Al with her back to me, turning, then her face as she climbs up the stairs. Her hair is pulled tight back and at the nape of her neck is a twisted ball of what used to be her long long hair. Mostly a frizz escaping around her head, the same color yellow that's in the faded Indian robe. Victor is sitting in the same chair, but his hands are knotted around the arm rest, like he is going to have trouble getting up. It might teach him about Cotton's mare. He is leaning forward as if he really might fall. His face is just as hard, it doesn't change hardly at all, ever. And he has that same harsh voice. But I am glad Al has gone up to bed while Victor looks over the mantel. "Alicia, with her soft honey braid," Victor has said to Pinwheel.

THE EXHIBITOR'S DANCE

THE EXHIBITOR'S DANCE

Nothing changed except that I decided to let everyone call me Anna. The day I mention was one full of trivia and I have decided to have no more such days because they make my palms sweat. I am Anna Igorevna Kolnikoff, the daughter of a Russian prince. Of what dominion he was prince I have never known and I have no interest for asking my mother, who does not have a photograph of him. The day I mention was a Saturday because I had the check for Harold Ebbitts, our landlord, and I had to drive Jenna and Vic to Mr. Ben Waters stables because they worked there every Saturday of the world since I got them their jobs, and every Saturday of the world I drove them there. And on the day I mention I had to get my silk dress cleaned because I was going to the Exhibitor's dance at White Springs and the Exhibitor's dance at White Springs was the most trifling of the trivia I had exposed myself to but it was all probably worth it because I did decide to let everyone call me Anna, and that has been very important.

The morning started. I pulled away from the yellow house where I live with my mother and drove down the unpaved nameless road which was built particularly for our house although there are a few more tenant houses and hay barns on the road. I looked back at the last moment I could see it before

I went around the curve and onto Valley Road. The house is so yellow it can be seen for a mile and a half down the road before you actually come to the picket fence that encloses its front and side yard. The house flashed under sunlight the way a big yellow flower will shine in the pinks and dark blues of a spring garden. Then the sycamore at the side of the road covered the house but I kept my eyes on the rear view mirror because there are bits of yellow even through thicknesses of green leaves, and a fork of yellow where the trunk splits upward to the leaves. I like our house because Harold Ebbitts painted it and not even the most formidable Sycamore in all Elkridge-Loudoun country can make it disappear.

I turned onto the main road and the color would have left my mind except I was thinking about Harold Ebbitts--he would come for his check to talk to me and I would be gone--and I had the hot pink cocktail dress under my fingers as soon as I put the car into high gear. Which makes no connection except that Harold Ebbitts did paint the house yellow in the first place and that I was wearing the pink cocktail dress at eight in the morning the first day I ever saw him. Harold Ebbitts is the fourth generation of Harold Ebbittses who have had the distinction of servitude to four generations of alternating Edward T. and Benjamin T. Waters, lords of the manor and masters of the Elkridge-Loudoun Hunt, which is the religion and the government of us all. Except Harold Ebbitts IV. Because to the great discredit of his distinguished ancestors

Harold Ebbitts IV became known to his friends in the town and eventually to the shocked members of Elkridge-Loudoun as Hooch Ebbitts, and then as Hoochie Boy. He was ousted from his home because he kept a litter of pigs downwind of Mr. Waters' flagstone patio newly laid around a kidney shaped swimming pool. The current member of alternating generations of Edward and Benjamin T's was grieved but consoled since all twenty-five acres of the Ebbitts land including those square feet under which the now-yellow tenant house stands never left the Waters estate and the house itself changed hands only by gentleman's agreement. But Mr. Benjamin always is a gentleman and he has allowed Hoochie Boy to collect all the rent of our yellow house. All of which has nothing to do with me except that I have been opening the front door every Saturday for three years when Harold Ebbitts comes for his money. Before that I did not write checks or drive a car and my mother wrote a check leaving it in the mailbox once a month. He has asked me to write a check every week since it helps him enormously in his family accounts, although it seems to help him more in his week-end relaxations.

The first time he came I kept him waiting while I put my pink satin cocktail dress on. It was the only thing hanging up in my closet and it takes too long to zip up my bluejeans because they are always getting small. I felt ridiculous barefoot in a pink satin cocktail dress at eight in the morning and I didn't want to open the door anyway. I never cared

for visitors. I thought it might have been Paddy Fitzhugh coming in to visit. He always cuts across our fields when he rides that ex-race horse of his. She is dark bay and stiff-legs it down the first hill that slopes toward our yard and Paddy has to rough hand her to keep her from jumping the picket. They come so close to my window I can hear them both breathing hard. But that morning it was not Paddy Fitzhugh and it never has been at my door, and I am glad because he is some of the trivia I have cut away. I can't imagine that I ever thought him a fine man. My palms would get sweaty when I thought he was always going to jump our picket on his frothing ex-race horse and pay me a visit.

Harold Ebbitts is different. The first time I saw him he was standing with his back to me with an arm wrapped around one of the thin columns on the porch. His feet were twisted under him and his weight was on the column. When he turned around he was not like anything I had heard. He was young. And when he unwound from the column he was still bent, but it was a muscular tension that bent his shoulders in toward his chest and hollowed in his stomach and he could have straightened like lightning. I didn't know him at first, or even think that the name Harold sewn in red thread over Wait's Esso belonged to our disgraced landlord. Harold Ebbitts is a beautiful man.

And he is my friend. He likes to squat on the porch and I will sit on the steps looking back and up at him and

we talk. But I had to take the dress and had the other things to do so I could not wait for him on the Saturday of the Exhibitor's dance. I took the cocktail dress into town to the only cleaners. I told the woman I had to have it for that night. I told her I was going to the Exhibitor's dance at White Springs. She didn't seem to hear me. She said what day would I like to pick it up. I said today and she took the dress and put a pin in it and said it will be all ready for you on Friday. I would have said thank-you and gone out but it was the only thing I had and I put on an air of regret and said I must have it tonight, thank you very much and took the pin out of the dress. Then I had to pick up Jenna. She was ready and came out and I did not go in. Jenna is another friend like Harold Ebbitts. She went to school where I went to school and she quit. She is very simple and nice and I like her very much. She works at the telephone company and on Saturday we go to Ben Waters' barn. It is because this is really what she wants to do. She likes to be in the clear outside doing something active. I hate to see oil under Harold Ebbitts' nails, from where he has been working inside the motors of cars. I taught her to clean tack and wash bits and she has learned to do it quite well. She has learned to do everything with horses except ride them.

On that day I picked up Jenna then we picked up Vic and drove to the Waters' barn. He is the eldest son of five children of the big woman who keeps our yellow house clean. It was silly to go over there the Saturday of the Exhibitor's dance

since Sidney had both her horses at White Springs where she was showing them Thursday and Friday and was still there on the last day of the show on Saturday. The Exhibitor's dance was the cap to the whole thing. She was going to win the championship with the gray. We were sure of it. The gray is the best horse in the country. Ben Waters' grandfather had bred his grandsire and picked years ahead before they were born her sire, Mr. Jack Crimmon's stud down in South Carolina, and her dam, the first filly by his own stud Cataclysm. So Sidney's gray is just as carefully selected as Sidney. Ben Waters had been going to marry Ellen Smithwick since they were ten years old. And Edward Waters had said when his wife bore the first son Benjamin T. Wouldn't it be pleasant if Benjamin were some day to marry Carl Smithwick's daughter if Carl and Jan were to have a daughter? And then of course Carl and Jan had to get busy and have a daughter. But in spite of all of it I think I like Sidney Waters. She just got through being the most beautiful child in the country. Ben and Ellen finally decided it was time to cut two feet of her never-cut flaxen braids. And Sidney has been riding since with a fly switch made out of a foot or so of her hair. She has the rest of it in a box that a coiffeur in New York sent back to her with a pretty chignon she can wear if she wants to at a cotillion. She is just as pretty with short hair. It is smooth in one soft arc around her face. And she is the only girl whose baby skin still covers the grown-up boning of her face. She was rather good when I brought Jenna by to her

the first time when it looked as if I were going to make a club of her barn with all my friends who needed to work. Vic had spent every Saturday last winter at the barn, sometimes coming on Friday evenings to help feed Ben Waters' horses. Sidney was rather good too when we went to the terrible fair at Ruxton with ferris wheels and pink cotton candy and green cotton candy. Jenna wanted me to go with her. I said yes. I had the car. Jenna caught a cold and Sidney said she would go to the fair with me. She thought I was the one wanted to go in the first place. But if I said no it would look as if I didn't want to go with Sidney. We went and I got sick on the shoot-the-shoot thing and Sidney walked me over to her maid's house in the town. They wanted me to lie upstairs but I stayed down on the sofa, and drank alka-seltzer in sips for twenty minutes. I was ashamed, but Sidney was really nice about it. Sitting on the stuffed chair across the coffee table from my sofa she looked properly concerned in a quiet way while her maid kept after me—let me get you a pillow, do you feel any better, more tonic—Sidney was damned nice so I came near hating her. I had disliked her because I thought she and her pretty little sister sat on hay bales in their loft and talked about me. And I liked her at the Exhibitor's dance. If it was her father's idea I don't know about it so I am going ahead and believe it was Sidney's idea. It was a decent idea and I am glad someone thought of it. When he had that red coat described to him his mouth opened wide as his face "oh

it's just 'marvyoulus'" and clapped his hands like a girl. Vic has a great big mouth anyway. I wondered about Sidney for a week. Did she ask Vic first or did she ask me so she could ask Vic or was it backwards. And then I found she asked Jenna, too. It might just be Sidney is naturally good manneredly nice to everyone. She is so trained to be it is not always real but it is just as good as real because she never slips. I wondered though, did she ask me as an afterthought of being nice. I did not really care to go in the first place. I never go out of the house for myself. The same way I never care about going out to buy clothes. Until I lose some weight. And I don't go out to school anymore. I hated that, it was common. What I am going to do next year. Next year I am going to buy a brilliant pony and train him and maybe Ben Waters' youngest girl could ride him in the summer shows. She is just ten and would love to look fit in a summer habit and go to all the shows. I don't show myself. My mare is an exceptionally fine heavy hunter half-bred. But not the flashy kind the judges like to see. Besides I don't like to take her away from her colts. She raised one two years ago and a filly last spring. But I could enter the pony in all the shows and make money because the sister is as pretty a child as Sidney was. Then I could go to exhibition dances if I wanted and would go to so many I would be tired of them. I would need to go hear about how the competition was feeling. I could then sell the pony to someone, advertising him in the Chronicle of the Horse

for $6000 and the Waters would see the advertisement. Then I would get another pony and do it all again. I would give the ponies such care they would all be champions. I'd put a string across the curtain rods and hang all the ribbons along them; a hundred points of ribbons would hang down so you could see them from the road, and if someone knew anything he would know what they were.

I stopped the car and we went into the barn at the Waters. The horses were at the show; the tack Jenna cleaned was at the show. I left Jenna mucking out the stalls Vic was supposed to do, with Vic saying he was going to clean windows. That was all there was to do because Jim who just about runs the whole Waters place keeps the barn terrific always. Anyway only Sidney's two horses were kept in during the summer, except for the brood mares who came in during the day, but they are up in the barn near the cattle fields. There was not a bit of grain in the passageway or a piece of dirt in the tackroom. The real work is in the mornings when Jim takes care of Sidney's horses, Sidney comes down to work each for an hour sometimes with Major Anglington, and Jim rubs them down, massages their legs, and turns them out for a couple of hours. Vic was going to wash windows with a tack sponge and the windows that were practically clean were in an hour smudgy and soapy and the next morning Jim had to squirt something on them and make them cleaner than the ones in my house. Jim hates Vic. He says he's no good. It's one reason we didn't go to White Springs with Sidney.

Jim could never say anything about Jenna of course, he left her alone or when he had to he spoke to her as civilly as he did to Sidney. Jim left me completely alone since I brought Vic over, and besides I knew what he thought about my not separating my mare from her colts.

The barn was open and clean and the air came in warm from both ends and sun from one end and a row of windows. The straw smelled fine. It was a morning it could have been good to sit around watching a blacksmith work. These are all the people, Vic and me and Jenna and Sidney, and a little of my mother and a little of Harold Ebbitts. And nothing really happened to anybody except I changed. Because they were all calling me Anne. But my father named me Anna that simply, and I decided they should call me Anna just as simply. My mother was the first. My mother is complicated but she is genuine and rather likeable although she does not look it. She was born in England and has an accent although she has spent the past seventeen years in her Winchester travel agency. Her body is caved out, shifted like dirt dug with water and she has no form, just a bulk under her print dresses. My mother wears no underwear except a great cotton slip. She has twenty cotton slips in her bedroom. That day I was breathless until I left Vic and Jenna at the barn and suddenly I had nothing to do. I went back to our house and I sat in the living room where the sun came in warm against the back of my neck. I sat in my print chair across from where my mother sits. She

always sits in the evenings in the brown velvet chair and the velvet is rubbed to white cloth where my mother puts her elbows. In the evenings I would sit in my print stuffed chair with my knees crossed in it, a knee against each arm of the chair and I would watch the brown velvet chair with my mother in it. Sometimes she would go away. She went on tours she had arranged and if there were an extra seat she took it. She went to the Olympic games in Japan and she did not know until two days before that she was going. There have never been two extra seats, yet. And when I am tired of the chair I go upstairs and lie in my bed with pillows under my back and my shoulders and I read history books. I like them and learn more in my bed than I did at school. I stopped when I was sixteen. World History was about Russia and one day the teacher asked what part my father came from and about it. I said I had a headache and went out and never came back. In my head I said go to hell man teaching World History. But I was not upset. I never liked school and I sat in my chair and crossed my knees and said, Mother I am not going to school any more. My mother looked up from her book, she reads French books in French and German books in German. "It isn't necessary, Anne. Don't trouble about it." An hour later she said in a question "Anne" that meant "Why, Anne, won't you go to school any more?" And I uncrossed my knees and went upstairs and leaned back on pillows and looked out my windows. Outside was a warm night before the summer season and it rained and I felt the damp and

heard birds, and the dark in the windows was sticky and warm and nice. The coverlet was limp and my gown was limp. I have beautiful gowns. That's one thing I buy. I was almost asleep when my mother said, "Don't trouble, Anne. T'isn't anything to trouble for. Goodnight, Anne." Since always I can remember how civil my mother is at night. Very civilly she has always stood at my door, her form broadening as she came closer to the sill and as the years made her wide, and she has always said with a different pronunciation from anyone else, broadening the vowels and shortening the words to a quick second, she says, "Goodnight, Anne."

All the day of the dance I did not know what to think. I was upset a little the way I was when I left school. I did not know what to expect. Vic would be splendid and Jenna was glad enough about going. Jenna likes dances. I had the dress out on the clothes line airing in the sun. I sat back against my chair and felt the sun on my hair. Once I had driven out of the house just after I learned to drive and got the car. I was out buying nightgowns and dog food and I think lightbulbs. I just went into a little shop I don't know what for, and I said, "I need a cocktail dress." The woman bent at the waist and lowered one shoulder toward me as if she were confiding something. She had a French accent and I wished my mother were there to speak with her and the woman would have bent her shoulder more and pounced backwards more when she put her hands together and she said, "I haf just the thing

for you." I said, I want something simple, black. I will wear it with a diamond pin, here." I made a circle with my hands and brought the circle up there where my breasts began to crease under the cotton dress. "Oui, I have something for the young lady." She turned her back to me, cocking her head to make me follow. She had a tiny frame and walked on terribly high heels so she wobbled at the ankles. I came away with a pink satin brocade dress that had pink chiffon sleeves and a curved neckline that made a curve identical with the curve of my collar bones.

I was glad I had the dress and glad I had kept it hung up and stiff and smooth. I am not neat about clothes. There is a pair of bluejeans always on my chair and summer wash-and-wear dresses that have roll up sleeves and button along the front with cloth matching belts and folds of cloth in the skirt. I look neat, though, and the cottons crisp themselves in the clothes dryer or sometimes I put them on the outside line that rolls into the back bedroom window like a clothesline for the city row houses. But usually the only things that hang up in the closet are skirts from winter I don't like to put away and peignoirs and the pink cocktail dress. I like sundresses a lot but I never bought one yet—so I had to choose to wear the pink brocade from the beginning, for the dance. I must have kept it three years without wearing it. That day I waited at the house thinking Harold Ebbitts might come back again to see if I were at home to give him the rent check.

But he didn't come back and I supposed he had to work and I went back to the barn to see Jenna and Vic. We had to do something so we moved all the hay bales to the back of the barn and made the straw neat in one place of the loft. Downstairs it had gotten so dusty we had to sweep the whole place. There was no surprise when Sidney came home in the pick-up truck with Jim pulling her two horses with the tack trunk in the back and the championship ribbon hanging down in three colored strips from the sun shade. Truck and trailer are blue on black, their stable colors and that's what color all the outfit is. Black with a blue line around the side. It is the best horse trailer made. Sidney could couple it if she wanted to, it is such a beautifully easy piece of machinery. I will get a trailer as nice for my pony but it will look less commercial. I will have an unobtrusive outfit without colors, maybe even a dark wooden trailer. And people will know the outfit and say, "Here's Tim Tam. He will take the pony division. He may be national champion, you know." Vic and Jenna might be good enough then they can shine and clean and get the little girl ready to show. Vic will rub her boots with a rag after she mounts to be sure there is no dust got on from mounting. I will sit with the spectators, walk over and eat a hot dog at the stand, and chat with people who come up to me and tell me who they are. In very little letters on the program next to the large ones of Tim Tam's name will be black printed—owned by Anna Igorevna Kolnikoff.

But what happened at the dance cannot be any worry. No one really knew anything that happened. They will think of me in connection with the pony champion. I might wander into the dances sometime. They won't know when to see me and when not. Tim Tam will mostly win but if he loses one time I can drop in on the dance in the middle of it perhaps or late or ahead of time, it doesn't matter actually, and they can ask me is Tim Tam not well or wasn't the little girl interfering with his mouth, and I can sip my drink running the ice around inside the glass to tinkle a little and answer with a calm thoughtful smile. "I think the Wilson boy rode his chestnut quite well today, yes very well. The judges at Hay market were doing very well to pin him. I thought so even before the jump offs with Tim Tam and the Chestnut. No, Tim Tam is quite healthy. Yes, I think the Wilson Boy's chestnut is an excellent pony. I might buy him."

Sidney went back to White Springs for a dinner party. They took Vic with them so he could get ready for the dance. They had him in the back seat with Sidney and he was incredibly dusty but he was sitting back not waving to Jenna and me and his mouth was saying 'marvyoulus'. I left Jenna at her house to get ready and when I got hime my mother was there and she was cooking our dinner. I didn't have time to bathe first. She had special eggs. She cooks eggs in a way I have never seen anyone else do. They are not yellow but come out pale almost white, and they taste excellently. My mother knows the best way of preparing everything, though sometimes

it is easier to have tv dinners. The eggs are a French way of cooking. Then I took a long bath. I always take long baths. Steamy hot ones with perfumes and I lie back; the yellow house has a bathtub on curved legs. And I always get sleepy and usually wrap up in a full length towel, I bought many great large towels. I bought purple ones and white ones and some with flowers on them. And I wrap up and step into slippers. My toes get pink. I go down the hall and fall on the top of my bed. I don't like to have my bed made. I fall on the bottom sheet pulling the top sheet over my head and enough blanket to cover a little of my knees and feet. I lie curled up with arms against my body and elbows resting against my thighs. When the towel starts to dry it makes me sticky and I throw it on the floor then I am dry enough to sleep. In the winter I like to take two baths a day because it is good sleeping with it so cold outside and me being warm enough to have pink toes. But I had to pick up Jenna so I opened the bathroom window wide to let the steam out. It didn't even fog the mirror. When I rubbed dry with the towel I felt waked up and re ady to do something in a hurry. My mother was reading in the velvet chair and she had her feet on an ottoman. She was quite comfortable and old. She looked up, her eyes were awake, she must have been absorbed in the magazine. She takes travel magazines in foreign languages, too. "You look quite fresh, Anne," my mother said. It is something I have that is pretty. My skin is very soft and I have pretty

color in my cheeks. It is a very delicate pink on my cheeks and spreading less bright back to my jaw. It looks quite beautiful with my light blue eyes and the very black of my hair. Mother's face is cracked and gray. She has nothing pretty except it is nice that she is so alert all the time. She always thinks. And it makes you interested in looking at her even though she is a worn out woman. I told her in the morning before she went to work about the dance. "You'll want to go in and buy a dress. Have you your checkbook, Anne?" I started to tell her I had something already but she was pulling back from the house. She turned to me with time enough to say quickly, "I am quite pleased. I'll have your dinner before you go." And she drove straight out of the yard, which on that side of the house where she parks her car is the barnyard. She drives very fast and her car is very small and cut off looking. She has had the same kind for years and my mother was driving me once to an auction in the small car very fast. One summer Major Anglington was teaching Ben Waters' family and living with them and he wanted to bring a boy up to ride. He was to be an Olympic rider he was such fine material. My mother offered to give him a place to stay. And we went to the auction to buy furniture for the bedroom. We like auctions. Sometimes there are the horse auctions. But I did not like the Olympic boy; he was small and silent and he rode Waters horses all day long and went to bed at eight and rose at five to feed and curry his mounts.

When we drove to the auction my mother saw a line of five cars in front of her and said, "This won't do; we've got to pass them or miss the auction." And she passed them all with a yellow line on her side. She zipped by in the roaring little car, passing five cars, I counted, and back into her lane before an oncoming truck really had time to frighten me. After she said she would fix my dinner before the dance she was zipping down the dirt road making terrific dust and I bet if there were five cars that morning she would pass them, too.

Even though I ate and bathed and dressed quickly I still felt in a rush when I left the house to pick up Jenna. She lives in a white house with pink shutters and a pink window box hanging out of her living room window. Her house is in a three year old housing development that Ben Waters fears worse than the beltway they are going to build to the south. Half her body was above the window box and when I shut the motor off I heard her finishing yelling to come on in she was almost ready. I sat on the couch and looked at yellow and blue and some orange flowers out the window in the box. Jenna was in her slip and she said she was more ready than she looked. She has long yellow hair and she was going to wind it up on top of her head. It isn't as pretty as Sidney's. Sidney's is sort of yellow white. All her colors go together, like her eyebrows. Jenna has sable eyebrows. I think her hair is colored or her eyebrows are changed. Well, I know she puts something on her eyebrows. You can see a painted line some-

times where she paints her skin by mistake. Her mother came in from the back yard. I heard the screen slam but I had not seen her outside as I drove in. During the hottest part of the day Jenna's mother lies down on a sheet and puts aluminum foil around her body so she can be sun tanned. She grows strawberries. She had some in a shoe box. I said something about the fine strawberries and she giggled. They are, too, they're great big and are always sweet, even the second time in the summer. But I was looking at the red camisole she was wearing. She wears them in summer and in winters, too. The house is hot enough in winter. I come to get Jenna in winter and I think I will always get a chill when I go away again. She wears halters. I had never heard the word used with people before. I said good evening, Mrs. Bynum, and then about the strawberries. She giggled because I was looking at her red camisole. She was just leaning against the entrance to the room on one leg. The other knee was rubbing the leg she stood on and the other foot was off the floor with toes flat down. I saw poses like that on posters for Miss Reinghold beer pageant. When they had that contest, posters were all over the city. I wondered if Jenna's mother got the way she was standing from those posters or she did it naturally. She needed a bigger halter. She went out and spoke to Jenna. It was getting dark. The flowers in the box bothered me. They were all colors to clash with the pink shutters outside and there

weren't any pink flowers. They were pleasant enough from inside though. I don't mind pink doors and shutters and window sills. I do live in a very yellow house. But I think they should have pink flowers. Jenna came in and she was wearing a sundress. It had one-string orange straps and sunflowers in the skirt. I thought she might not be dressed as I was because when her mother had gone into the next room to speak with her, she had told her, "Honey, she's wearing a silk dress." Jenna said how pretty I looked. I said she looked pretty, too. Then I wished I hadn't said, too. As if I were complimenting myself. Jenna's mother propped herself in the door when we left saying have a good old time and about men could pick their styles tonight and for me to call her Bootsie, everybody did. I called good evening and sounded too formal but I was thinking hard not to call her Bootsie.

Jenna and I only half talked in the car. I was too busy wondering how it was going to be. I wondered what the ball room looked like. Where I would park and how to enter. Should I stop in the doorway until I saw Sidney. Jenna would be behind me. I would not desert her, I am always her friend. She loves me.

I was not actually worried, but felt the way I did when I had left school. I am always fine after I have done something a few times. I can drive in city traffic now any time I want. But it was the not knowing that made my palms sweat. I didn't want rings on my dress either. One thing I have

always noticed about Sidney even when she is showing in a black coat, she never sweats. I parked in a parking lot with many cars in it and people were going in at a door to the building off the parking lot. There were men standing around outside the door talking. One had his foot on a copper urn near the entrance and his arm swung over his knee as he leaned over. He was looking at me but I was not indicating I noticed. Jenna poked me just then, "Look at the boys in this place, we're gonna dance tonight." That man smiled. I almost ran into Vic the next second. He was standing in the doorway and he was saying to me, "Good eve-en-ing, your exhibitor's pass, please." There was a man sitting at a table behind him with a money box. He was charging entrance to people without passes. I had none. Vic was grinning so broadly he was drooling just a little. Jenna slapped his shoulder making his stiff posture waver, saying, "Vic, you look 'marvyoulous'." He said to her what he said to me, and then to the man coming in behind us, who showed him his pass. Jenna held up traffic a moment telling Vic how really great he was and Mr. Waters was motioning to me. He was half way out of his chair to make me see him. Jenna was coming up beside me. I thought how simple this really was and I was not bothered any more.

Sidney had on a blue linen dress. Mr. Waters said I looked exquisite. Sidney smiled and was nodding to people who waved a victory sign at her with their two middle fingers.

I can wear any dress I please. Mrs. Waters had Jenna sit next to her and told her Sidney had the lovliest tack cleaner in the country. Mrs. Waters leans forward always to articulate her words. She is a woman with warmth and correctness in balance to perfection. I don't like Mrs. Waters. I was given a drink but the ice was crushed and slushy. I couldn't tinkle the ice. The other one at the table was Carl Smithwick, Mrs. Waters' nephew. He was next to me. His chin was about parallel to the base of my neck. I looked straight ahead. They all had a lovely dinner, as Carl's guests. He belonged to the White Springs club. The Waters of course didn't. The only club to Mrs. Waters is Elkridge-Loudoun Hunt. She didn't say that. She said, "Carl was so good to have us. White Springs is so nice." She didn't say celebration dinner either, or anything like it. She was perfect. I hate her. Everyone has to be part of the conversation with her. Everyone has to be included. She had Jenna chattering wildly. Sorry to be late. Anne picked me up in plenty of time. My hair I couldn't get it up. Sometimes it is impossible. "It looks so lovely, Jenna." Mrs. Waters interrupted to say some more nice things. But Mrs. Waters had no kind of success in me. My mother is well. The dogs are well. My mare is well. I am well. I bought the dress at La Parisienne in Winchester. So what. She had warbled agreement somewhere down in her throat when I first came up and Mr. Waters said I looked exquisite. Mrs. Waters calls her daughter Siddie. She calls her dog Woo-Woo.

Sidney used to have a pony she called Eh-Eh. I can't guess what she calls Mr. Waters. Her nephew was leaning over the table near me, his chin even with the base of my neck. Jenna chattered with everyone. Sidney was gracious. I do have to admire Sidney, and I feel there is genuine feeling between us. You can hear her think sometimes but she always does the right thing, as at the fair when I ate the green cotton candy and rode the shoot-the-shoot. She was receiving congratulations every few moments, very nicely. She seemed not to care she took the championship at White Springs. I don't think really it made much difference to her. But I don't think it occurred to her that she would lose. When I think too long about Sidney I dislike her so I stopped. Her sister would ride for me next year. The sister is a small size of Sidney. Mrs. Waters turned them out just alike. Music was starting a little in the big dance room. Lights in green and yellow glass bowls were on the tables. Mr. Waters had smoke hanging above his shoulder from his cigar. Carl danced with Sidney. He said something about all the lovely ladies. He asked Mrs. Waters to dance then he asked me. I looked over his shoulder and smiled when he said some things, pretended not to hear some others, and I watched the lights in the colored bowls on the tables. There were other bowls hanging from the ceiling by chains. We sat down and Jenna was gone. She was laughing from the dance floor with somebody. I didn't know who it could be. I didn't like the dance. Mr. and Mrs. Waters left

because Sidney had Carl to take her home. I had not expected anything different at the Exhibitor's dance. I thought, "When I get Tim Tam I might not even come very much." Jenna had her shoes off and a man had her by one finger. Sidney had people come by the table. They all asked to dance with me. I did or I didn't, mostly I didn't. Mostly I didn't care for the men. Harold Ebbitts could have done much more nicely than most of them. These were smooth and vacant. Then suddenly Sidney was gone. She put a man down beside me, Jack Voss, I must know him, his brother is the steeple-chase jockey. And then Sidney was gone. He talked and smoked, and brought me a drink. It had hard ice in it and I remembered to tinkle the ice. I said to him, "These affairs are dull." Oh yes he said but he really didn't seem to think so, he was so cheerful. Would I like to dance, well then we could just sit here and look at all the people. Later I said, "Oh, I might dance one." There weren't so many people anymore. Vic was still over at the door, like a shiny lead pipe with a red coat and a shiny lead knob on top. I said I must have some air, and got up and walked toward Vic. The steeplechase jockey's brother followed me. Vic grinned. He was happy to stand there. The man at the table behind him was gone and he didn't ask for passes. The steeplechase jockey's brother got up with me. He had a black polo shirt on. He was smiling and I thought he was going to hold me. He had a cigarette lit but still I think he was going to hold me. In the garden there weren't any people I could see. "You know,

Anne, I think you are quite interesting." I didn't say anything. "Your name, it is Polish". Russian I said to him. And he asked me some more questions and I said I am the only surviving daughter of Prince Igor Kolnikoff of Russia. And he said very interesting. I didn't see the people in the garden, but I could hear them.

He was going to squeeze my hand and I said I have to go my fiance is going to telephone. He rocked back from me on his heels. He did not step back but it gave the feeling he was far away. "Your fiance, he is Russian?" No, English, I said. He will call tonight from England. The cliffs of Dover. He is a lord you know, Lord Harold Ebbitts." There was a noise behind me; I didn't know if the steeplechase jockey's brother wanted to hold me anymore. I didn't turn around to the noise but I said, "I know what they do in the shrubbery." What was that?" he said. I didn't mean to say it out loud. "I know what they do in the shrubbery," I said again. I backed up and turned toward the entrance to the dance where the music was coming out. I looked back once, he had the cigarette at his mouth and he was looking after me. He waved. I was at the door and said, "Vic, let's go." "Ma'am he said. I said let's go and pulled at his shoulder and he had to follow. Somebody came walking out of the shrubbery. Jenna and a man. Let him have her. No, it was Sidney and a man. Well, let him have HER. Let them walk back into the White Springs club garden shrubbery. Vic was saying he couldn't leave his post. He

was as extravagantly distressed as he had been happy moments before. He was almost wailing. But he got in the front seat and I drove out of the parking lot. I drove fast, and I would have passed cars in front of me if there had been five. And I drove out of White Springs. It was beginning to rain some but I left the wipers off and I thought what they would do about that in the shrubbery. The warmness of the summer night became damp and my pink brocade cocktail dress was going limp. I felt better and looked over at Vic. I said, "It was a nice party? Vic?" I have their red coat he said. "Don't worry about that, they won't mind. Vic, you can show the coat to your family tonight, the whole suit." Then he said yes ma'am I can show it to them tonight, they'll be up, and the grin began to spread. Vic was all right. I might use him to go with Tim Tam. Even in the damp my hands were dry. I left Vic at his house and went down the Valley Road until I turned toward home. I passed the sycamore. There was no breeze and the sycamore was still. I didn't make dust. Not even a dark evening could subdue my yellow house, even with no moon it was bright. I got out at the side and went around to the front. I opened the screen and door, got inside, then closed the screen on the check I had for Harold Ebbitts so it stuck halfway out the screen door. There was a spring latch but the check fell out. I carried it out in the rain to the mail box and closed the lid so half the check hung out. My shoes went damp. I went upstairs, shed the dress on the floor, and stockings and

garter belt which had made a red ridge across my stomach. I pulled a gold chiffon gown on then pulled it off because its lace sleeves scratched my skin. I curled in the middle of the bed. I heard Mother come down the hall, she said, "Goodnight Anne" I didn't say anything. "Anne" she said. I said "call me Anna". I pulled the sheet up and the coverlet half-way over me. "Good-night Anna" she said quietly. She went back up the hall. I smiled at the limp darkness, this was the kind of night I loved, where I liked best to be. I rolled on my back and was quite relaxed, and felt good and safe to think that nothing had really happened, only the name.

HAPPY BUCKEY'S DREAM DELIGHT

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Ben Waters could remember with colors and fragrance and touch something that he lived when he was six years old. Posie was riding a lean chestnut mare and Posie had on a heavy dull brown jacket with dark brown fur inside the collar which was turned up. Ben was following at an independent distance but became concerned when she turned past some trees and was out of sight. Ben trotted his pony, which meant kicking her violently because she had cast iron sides, and she had cast iron sides because she had always been kicked by impatient child feet. He came around the tree and he saw Posie. Now when he is expecting to become a sage at any moment he can still remember how he saw Posie. She was sitting her mare, the graceful long-legged chestnut, both of them moving away as one but descending a soft dip in the earth so their left side was almost in full view of Ben, the haunch bigger and the chestnut's nose little and almost out of sight. It was dawn and a red gold sun had just slapped the mare and the brown jacket and Posie's brown hair, and they were burning. They were burning with a deathless brilliance that made Ben love as he could not perhaps do again unless that came with his becoming a sage which should be soon now. That moment he fondled and dreamt and cherished with the unthinking pleasure

that sometimes caused him to run his tongue around his lips because something tasted good. At that moment with the greatness of six years he loved his mother. Her name was Penelope. It was her name until a few years ago when he saw her face made pretty like rubbed wax of artificial table fruit, and imposed on its surface were eye-lids and cheeks and pursed smiling lips of the innocent corpse. Then he no longer had a mother named Penelope. He no longer had a mother with a thin face of sickness drained of fluids, with a match box dryness that made him hate to look because she was ineffably ugly. He no longer had one who was called Posie and rode a chestnut mare at dawn, and the soft oval of where she held him before they knew who he was had become hard and rotted away by now and nothing anymore. He had cried when they shot the lean chestnut mare for being old and losing her teeth so she couldn't chew enough to live. Her once rich chestnut coat had become flaky and he watched them roll her over limp into the hole of their pretty horse burying grounds. The Waters had a cemetery for the family horses prettier than the marbled drawers of the mausoleum where they put Posie after she had been made wax.

Ben could remember details of his moment or perhaps he had added details as his experience and observation increased through the years. Though it made them no less true. He stood with his back to his desk, arms behind him and leaning on the backs of his hands, palms curving around the leather chair. He looked past mullioned windows and a cheerful side lawn to

his vision. They had risen to ride before dawn. They caught his pony in the dark paddock with her looking smaller and being friendly out of curiosity for the hour when there were usually no people. They were hacking to a cub hunt before the season officially opened. Their horses made swish sounds with their tails on the tall damp grass and there were summer noises of insects. The buzz increased after dawn so they were hot annoying sounds, but before dawn they were carolers of his moment. And it was cold. He had to blow on his knuckles with hands pulled out of string gloves so he could see the cracked painful redness. If he rapped them hard the fingers would likely fall off. His feet were numb and only his mother looked warm in the jacket with the fur collar turned up around her ears. The brilliance of the sun was fabulous in its coldness. And the trees were permeated with a wetness, the air was moist and the leaves that had not fallen were drained of color from their determination to remain on the tree. Ben Water's vision was real in all these seasons since he knew the land and the feel of the horses in every second of the year's shiftings. And as he rode his chestnut gelding alone behind fox and hounds with the field of huntsmen seconds behind he experienced all the details of his vision again. He would ride with half of his attention on the master's duties then snap awake with the thought that it had been before him again, in the mind's eye of his sixth year of life.

Benjamin T. Waters is master of Elkridge-Loudoun hunt.

He inherited from his father who did from his father a tradition which was of necessity the life's work of them all. The father Edward T. wore boots of his father the first Benjamin T. and hand tied his own white linen stocks. Ben received no boots because Edward bought fine laced ones when he was thirty-five. They were so durable and soft that at seventy-four, Edward was driven to the barn where he walked to his horse in scuff slippers, sat on a folding chair while he laced his own paper thin boots. He dismounted in the same manner with the same chair appearing and the scuff sandals handed to him. Ben has the boots in his dressing room, they don't stand up by themselves but the high tops fold twice into a cloth bag. Once Ben showed them to his eldest daughter Sidney. She held the leather between two of her long elegant fingers and could feel one finger against the other although the leather was between them. She had not asked to see them again. Nor had he inherited from either of them their uncanny ability as master of Elkridge-Loudoun. With one, the grandfather, it was a passion, the one participation that had meaning—the rest of his life but the interim between hunts. The father Edward's passion had been the breeding of horses. He did it selectively for fine and sturdy limbs, round dark eyes, and an alertness which reddened the nostrils at an intimation of a day's hunting. But his own passion he has not discovered yet. It is not the stud Cataclysm which is the pinnacle of generations of great bloodlines. Nor is it the strategy of

the hunt. Nor does he daydream of the attractively regular features of his wife. She had been perfected, selected for him under the same trained eye of the father who discerned bloodlines and durability without a hesitating glance. Nor is it his two handsome daughters Sidney and Neal, though he feels perhaps it might be someday. For what Ben Waters does feel is his growing role as paterfamilia of the world of all the Elkridge-Loudoun lands. They are extensive lands, among the most handsome perhaps of any in the entire world, and the families are of the best and worthiest that he should be their head. The path to this wisdom has been tortuous, but he understands that soon now he will have his heart's desire.

He rises with the alacrity that comes with knowing that today he can please himself. Carl Smithwick, his wife's brother and businessman of his own family and Ben's will come for signatures to his papers but Ben can put off business perhaps until tomorrow, even until days have passed, because today is his own. It is nearly full daylight. He awoke when it was still a one tone gray outside with mist coming toward the house in a velvet ground rain. He would have liked to go out then to the barn but he would have had to experience this day then the reopening of the day with sunshine. It would make him depressed as it used to when he fortified with wood fire, blanket and book to read against a gray snowstorm day; then the sun would waver behind a cloud, finally appearing with force bright enough to start the melting process and give an

appealing warmth of spring promise. And Ben would be left alone with a mood and without the weather and closed comfort to sustain it.

He need not dress meticulously, though he does. The final dreadful hunt of the season was weeks ago. The most formal, the hottest, the noisiest child-filled hunt of the year except for the Thanksgiving one. The final dinners and breakfasts, shipping hounds out to be walked for the summer, and the difficulties of closing the hunt club, shifting its activities to the summer race horse workouts, was all finished. He has this day to himself.

Happy Buckey is feeding near the spring, a long walk down into the back pasture. By noon he will be standing at the fence near the barn, on three legs, his head down, eyelids nearly shut giving him the appearance of ultimate stupidity or extreme comfort, Ben could never decide which. The walk to the spring is a pleasant one, grass sparkling where new yellow of morning sun touches it in patches, quickly drying the dew. The dawn accomplishes its work as if there is no movement or growth until it revels with a burst of the purest sun of the day saved just for the moment of triumph, then slowly abating, merging into dull buzzing heat of early June. The horse is Happy Buckey's Dream Delight, Ben's enviable mount in the hunting field. Before Happy was Lovely Day although Ben could not call her that since she was named for Penelope's chestnut mare, and Ben just called her Old Girl and Mommie.

He would be riding at a loose walk home and suddenly be aware of her. He would lean down and grab her neck and chest and slap her gustily. Good old girl he would say, good old Mommie. Happy is the most sensible, self-contained of his mounts, he reacts with equaninimity though with competent intelligent speed. He has a healthy brain and a round strong body; reservedly, though with genuine good nature he is Ben's friend. Ben stands near the stream under a water oak watching until Happy raises his head from grazing. Ben hears the rubbery pull of grass shredded from the roots and the busy interminable movement of the horse's jaws. Happy is alone across the stream, the other horses probably beyond the top of the low hill behind him. Happy stops. The chewing is interrupted and he stares at Ben, blinking. Then the jaws resume though Happy is a statue. The tail swishes once on each side catching in its coarse brown red strands the smooth yellow sunshine. Then Happy lowers his head to graze, watching Ben with some attention as he might follow with his eyes the movement of a bird close by hopping for worms. This is like Happy; Ben expects this. He will not balk or shy away or deliberately avoid being caught. But he will make Ben walk up to him and attach the lead shank to his halter. The first Lovely Day was the only horse devoted to Ben. She would stand with her neck arched over the white rail fence, scratching the skin to lower her head to Ben's small hand. He remembers seeing his clumsy fingers creased with baby fat stroking her incredibly

soft nose. She would take sugar from his half open palm only with her lips, her whiskers tickling and his hand wet when she snorted as she shook away a fly. She would turn her great arched neck sideways and bump his body with her head, rubbing away an itch against Ben's body which was staggering with an effort to remain upright. Ben leads Happy and looks back to appreciate his fine animal, putting the first Lovely Day out of his mind after one flinching effort.

He stops at the fence tying Happy, not wanting to leave the sunshine for the dark cool corridor of the barn. It will be nice to walk in the barn to dismount, but now the comfort of daylight. He brings out brushes and the saddle and bridle, the fragrance of Happy's healthy shining coat delighting his master. The great stallion Cataclysm has appeared around the corner of the barn, active always, now at a trot, but a comfortable ambling trot, moving out of curiosity to see who Happy Buckey is near his paddock, investigating. He sees Ben, stands a moment deciding not to nicker again as he did before he appeared around the barn. Then he trots away at an amble, stops at the far side of the flowering apple tree, does not bother to watch any more, and lowers his head to graze.

Ben mounts Happy Buckey and walks out of the barnyard along the lane between Happy's pasture and the field of Catalysm. He reaches the road and turns left across the fallow field along Cataclysm's fence. Cataclysm lifts his

head once more but does not trot across the field. He lies down rolling, scratching his back and sides, kicking with the effort to turn completely over. Ben gathers the reins and moves into a responsive trot until the end of the field and the beginning of the woods at the chicken coop. Before he decides to jump Happy into the woods he thinks of his eldest daughter Sidney. He sees her as she was one autumn afternoon at the chicken coop, crouched on the tree stump crying, interrupting the steady wail only for a deep sob, then increasing the high little girl sound of unhappiness. His first glance took in her unhurt limbs, no blood, and the dirt smudge on her forehead. He moved the mare into a trot in the direction of Sidney's confused pony, reins trailing, and the pony not able to decide whether to run or wait for the mare to approach. Ben dismounted and picked up the reins, while Sidney's pony felt relief of a thing finished and the security of being guided again. Ben remounted the mare leading the pony at a walk, cognizant of the new swelling in the pony's rear leg and the fragment missing from the front hoof. As he came to her Sidney had just noticed a cut on her elbow and thin scratches with intimations of blood along the skinned area. Her cry rose again in fury of the discovery. Her face was contorted in the indelicacy of lost control. Daddy she wailed as her lies became instantly formulated with the words which tumbled out. There was a ragged nail on the chicken coop and

she came into the jump out of the woods. Sidney saw it and started to stop the pony. But the pony had so much heart she could not refuse, she hit the nail with her front hoof carving a wedge and falling with her head and neck along the ground. Ben never said why were you afraid of the chicken coop, why did you hesitate and why now have you perhaps destroyed the productivity of an honest pony. She looked at him as if to say you don't believe me Daddy, you better believe me so I'll make you believe the truth as I have made it up. And she cried with more determination than ever. Ben took her young body up before him in the saddle soothing her until they reached the lane and her sobs were only small sounds in her throat rising no farther than her palette, to begin in earnest once more when he transferred her to her mother's arms. Ben allows Happy Buckey to move into his very sure canter and he jumps the weather gray chicken coop into the woods. It will be too hot for the woods soon, insects are already coming to attack Happy's ears. Ben rips a branch fighting the green limb, twisting it and fighting the chewy end until it is free in his hand. He leans over the horse's neck and fans the leaves over his ears. A flat-winged brown insect settles on Happy's neck and Ben kills it with his open palm. The body explodes and thick bright blood smears along Happy's neck and covers Ben's hand seeping into the creases of his palm. Then when the horse's neck gets wet from exercise and heat and dirt collects on the reins, there will settle damp

grit on Ben's hands between his fingers so he will not want to brush the sweat from his forehead with them. But he can only think of Sidney in moments of her life. Her beauty has grown purely until it is almost divine and he feels deeply when he sees her come in a room or walk to a table of waiting friends at a party. She has grown up in his home, in his Elkridge-Loudoun world with the appropriate summer trips to Vienna and the west coast. But she has not been steadily before him. He has never been with her days or weeks, reveling in her playing near him for hours or being held by him long at nights before she sleeps. But Sidney has grown up in moments as if she had posed for a series of photographs and Ben has said these photographs are my daughter. And Neal at ten or eleven now is the background to Sidney's growing up. It is happening in the shadows of his reverie, coming into a lighted room at dinner or passing from the vestibule onto the lawn of a rainy day. Yet Ben knows his daughter, graceful, delightfully at ease in company, sure in linen or in the satin of her debutante ball gown. And he knows her from moments. As the moment in his study when he had just hung the chart. He had read in a periodical that he could have on fine parchment the lineage of any of his hounds for seven dollars, the pedigree would register four generations and for twelve dollars he could see the names of bloodlines reaching back as many as fourteen generations. Ben had ordered it for a hound at random since there were none he loved, he simply admired them for

their different kinds of hunting skill. The parchment came and was not so impressive as the description of its printing. But Ben was delighted at the names and the fact that he had the names in print on the wall. He ordered a black frame with a dark marbled edge. He turned about the room from different angles and saw his parchment. The names were in bold regular print instead of a pretty script. He gloated from the window where he leaned his elbow as he sat in his comfortable desk chair. There was little on the desk except gold of ink wells and pretty desk adornments. Sidney came into the room almost disheveled from a ride. She saw her father and walked toward the couch with a glass of lemonade. She sat down almost heavily and settled back into what was almost a slouch. He had her notice the pedigree in its bright red ink and black print and printed picture of hounds running across the top. She looked and exclaimed louder than she ever usually did. But Daddy it's so — and she stopped with the sound in her throat. She lowered her voice then and said, it's charming Daddy. And she walked over to the glassed frame and carefully studied the names of generations of one of her father's hounds. She commented and smiled and made interesting associations with names of hounds living and those others whose names she tried to remember. They chatted until she rose to bathe and refresh after the ride. But Ben caught an image of her that photographed in his mind. And he remembered a little ashamed that he had been gratified to see a flat brown tick

clinging to her blond eyebrow.

Happy Buckey canters out of the yellow green shade of the woods. He trots quickly, loosely across the field with the ruined house in its middle. Ben pulls to a walk and passes between the two tall brick chimneys. The tractor road passes through the middle of the house skeleton. A stone wall projects for four feet to the left. There is a rambling vine profuse on the wall's back and sides so that only a few stones are visible. It is as if the vines are a soft tunnel and a man could step knee deep in its midst. It looks mysteriously hollow, the burying place as it occurs to Ben for the house's soul. Ben passes through the ruin and they gallop together. Happy and Ben gallop first controlled and then they gallop faster than it is conceivable to run. Ben leans forward not thinking of breathing, perhaps not breathing but having wind beaten into him by the onrushing wind. Happy is not moving toward anything. The tractor road and the field are long, they are open and sparkling but horse nor rider is aware. Only there is the movement, the fierce pounding on the hard dirt road. They are at one with the incredible motion that every fiber of them is straining for, releasing what they are, and they are alive.

Ben's knees begin to slip. Happy can hear his own breathing, feel his own heart pounding until the throbbing of his blood through his body is painful. The road has curved and he can see the end of the road at a closed wooden gate. Ben feels the sweat in his hands, the white foam of Happy's neck

is in his hands causing the wet reins to slip. Together at the same moment they know the run is to be ended, any more would be a mistake. They stop near the gate, they have finished. Happy knows he need not jump the fence. He stands blowing out his lungs while Ben reaches down to open the latch. Happy wheels through, pivoting around to stand where Ben can reach down again to close the gate. They turn to the path on the right walking in the shade woods along the edge of an alfalfa field. Neither wants to go in the woods, there are the flies. At the woods' edge they have the flecked light and the nice summer wood buzzing sounds, but not so many flies. Ben comes onto Fitzhugh land. Two retired steeplechasers come to the fence to extend their noses toward Happy. One nips at Happy's face and Happy squeals. The two horses turn away and run together a few yards, then separate wickedly, the one kicking out with hind feet at the other, the smaller horse returning the kick but aiming in anger at the air. Then they settle near the middle of the field, grazing close together as friends. Ben sees the brown ancient farm house at a distance. He can see no movement. Paddy Fitzhugh is asleep. The men in the bedrooms are asleep and the man on the couch and the one on the floor are asleep all resting peacefully the sleep of friends. Ben went to Paddy's party last night, too. He is always invited and he always comes by before nine, before Paddy and his friends play polo bareback on the children's ponies or strip as they run down the path to the horse watering

lake in the back pasture. Sometimes, even often, Ben would like to stay. The pattern is set now and it is too late to extend the short visits. Besides young Paddy is a wild man, racing fiercely drinking and playing with as much single-mindedness as he has when racing. He is the best steeple chase jockey in the country, one of the best in Europe, and the accepted failure of all members of Elkridge-Loudoun country. Happy is not breathing so hard now but he is hot and growing tired. He shakes his head and froth flies out from his hanging lips and joins the foam along his neck and under the reins. Ben cannot help Paddy. It is the others of Elkridge-Loudoun, the generation of calm ones born of generations before them of calm worthy people who will not allow the failure of wildness to manifest in their lives or their children's lives.

Happy turns toward home but Ben moves him in the opposite direction, going toward the house where he grew up. There are two Waters houses in Elkridge-Loudoun. One is Cool Brook where his father lived. Ben moved out when his grandfather died and Ben took the grandfather's house. Cool Brook has the greatest beauty of the two Ben had always thought, but his wife had been glad that their generation got the other farm because it was bigger and brighter and had french doors, a stone patio and the perfect spot for the great kidney shaped pool she had ordered built two years ago. Sidney may marry a lawyer and she has said she will not live at Cool Brook because it is very nice she says but simply too compact, she says to be

practical. Ben would suggest that they move back to Cool Brook but his wife would shriek in a well bred undertone. Instead Mrs. Kolnikoff had wanted to buy Cool Brook for the three years she had been living in its yellow tenant house. Mrs. Waters thought that charming and she magnanimously arranged with her brother to sell Cool Brook to Mrs. Kolnikoff and Mrs. Waters knew Ben would be so pleased to have one more unnecessary trouble off his hands. Since his parents' death he had been obliged to keep the place up and it was a bother, was it not. Besides Sidney will want to travel to Arthur's estate that backs on the Vanderbilt estate when she decides to marry him. Ben feels desire to ride into the yard. He will go around to the rusted gate, open it with facility and ride into the yard from the back. He had opened it countless times, repaired it, fought as it always sagged into the ditch it made; he had learned to operate the difficult old gate with ease. They walk up the hill to the back gate and Ben does not dismount but leans over to open a new aluminum fence with a flick of his wrist. He rides around to the front, then decides he should not be in Mrs. Kolnikoff's yard. He goes up the land and Happy starts to walk faster, knowing the direction toward home. Ben actually has to pull at the reins to jump Happy over the post and rail fence into the pasture in front of Cool Brook. Then they stand facing the great brick house from across the top of the yellow, sweet rose bushes that ramble wildly and magnificently about the barely visible rail fence

beneath. Ben instinctively looks to the upper right window, Mrs. Kolnikoff's bedroom. It used to be his own, and he sees looking down on him or beyond him Mrs. Igor Kolnikoff. He can see in the long wide window her arms lying on the straight arms of a big chair pushed to that window. He saluted her always when the hunt was casting over this field. She has told him how she loves to watch them all ride by. She sits straight and silent, nodding only faintly though grandly at him as he raises his hand in silent greeting. Then the daughter Anna appears at the window behind her mother and administers somehow to her because she brings her head down almost to her mother's ear. Anna had left her mother a year ago and shopkeepers in Ruxton had told stories of her leaving with a professional horse show man who was thirty-six years old. Anna must be barely over twenty now. But Ben never spoke except pleasantly to Mrs. Kolnikoff listening about Anna's letters from the English relation across the Atlantic. But Anna had come back silent never leaving the house, withdrawn from Sidney's congenial efforts to invite her out. Anna does not greet Ben, though he does not expect it. The two sit and stand like stone, looking down past him from his own bedroom window. He has no wisdom for them, he only wants ardently to have them out of his bedroom where he grew up and where he kept the pebble collection on that window sill. He nods again and turns Happy away. Happy begins to sweat heavily again from the heat this time. Ben's eye and trained muscles know he has been out too

long. He starts toward home and sees a tall stand of trees around which he knows is the forty acre pasture. A tall chestnut horse comes around the corner munching there ranging forward extending her slender neck with an almost human delicacy. Happy does not want to respond to his master, after a full gallop in early June at ten in the morning. Happy tries to turn toward home. Ben kicks him, he leaves and jumps, surprised at the force of Ben's heels on his sides. Happy trots in the heat around the field then Ben makes him canter the length of the pasture, jump the brook and come up to the open field where he loved to ride so much as a child. Ben comes to the edge of the woods and pulls Happy up sharply, then pushes him ahead a sharp trot. They come around a projection of trees and there is the sun haze of a hot day approaching noon. Ben sits his horse and looks at the empty field, the sweat pouring down his neck from his hair and forehead into his eyes. Penelope his mother would not have liked to see Cool Brook with the Kolnikoffs at his window. Ben thinks Penelope would have been angered with him for doing it or allowing it to be done. He trots past the spot where he waited to see the sun rise as a child but it is too late and the June day is now much toofar along and it is horribly throat burningly hot. He delays one second more then pulls Happy toward the pickett fence back toward Cool Brook. Happy Buckey balks, this is not the way he knows to go home. Ben pushes him, turns him. Happy's body heat and lather and tired

legs are deciding him in protesting to his master. But Ben pushes him, and Happy responds haltingly. They come into the old jump, there are vines thick on the ground. Happy is balking, his feet tangle and he rears in anger and fear and frustration. Ben slips back over the wet flanks knowing it is useless to struggle for control. He crumples with the vines, the rolling horse across his left leg. Happy rises and Ben looks at him with interest. An excellent hunter with such fine lines Ben automatically observes. Sweat falls from Happy who is now as frightened as he is tired. He tries to shake the sweat off. Ben has not fallen from a horse in ten years. The soaked reins are on the ground. Ben leans forward to touch the reins but his left ankle cannot sustain his weight. He cannot feel the leg and he rolls on his side to reach the reins. Happy suddenly sees his freedom, he jumps away then stands staring down at Ben from a short distance. Anger rises in Ben as the decision comes upon Happy. The fine hunter who has never balked before, always responded and always allowed himself to be approached is walking away toward home. He stops once more in hesitation. Ben picks up a bit of rock and aims it squarely for Happy's forehead. The horse jumps away, trots with reins dangling then with direction he moves into a canter toward home; perhaps the reins will not trip him is Ben's automatic thought. Ben lies back and shades his eyes from the sun. His hunter will go home and they will come

looking for him. Perhaps he will sit in his den and tell this to Sidney, she will listen, and she will learn something. Perhaps if his ankle is not damaged seriously he can ride his stallion Cataclysm in the cool of this evening. Ben feels the ankle begin to hurt, the swelling beginning to push against the creased leather of his boots, a steady mounting hurt. Besides, he thinks just before the pain comes from his mouth in a cry, besides, if he saw Sidney right now or in the evening he could probably not think of anything to say.